



Learning and Literacy

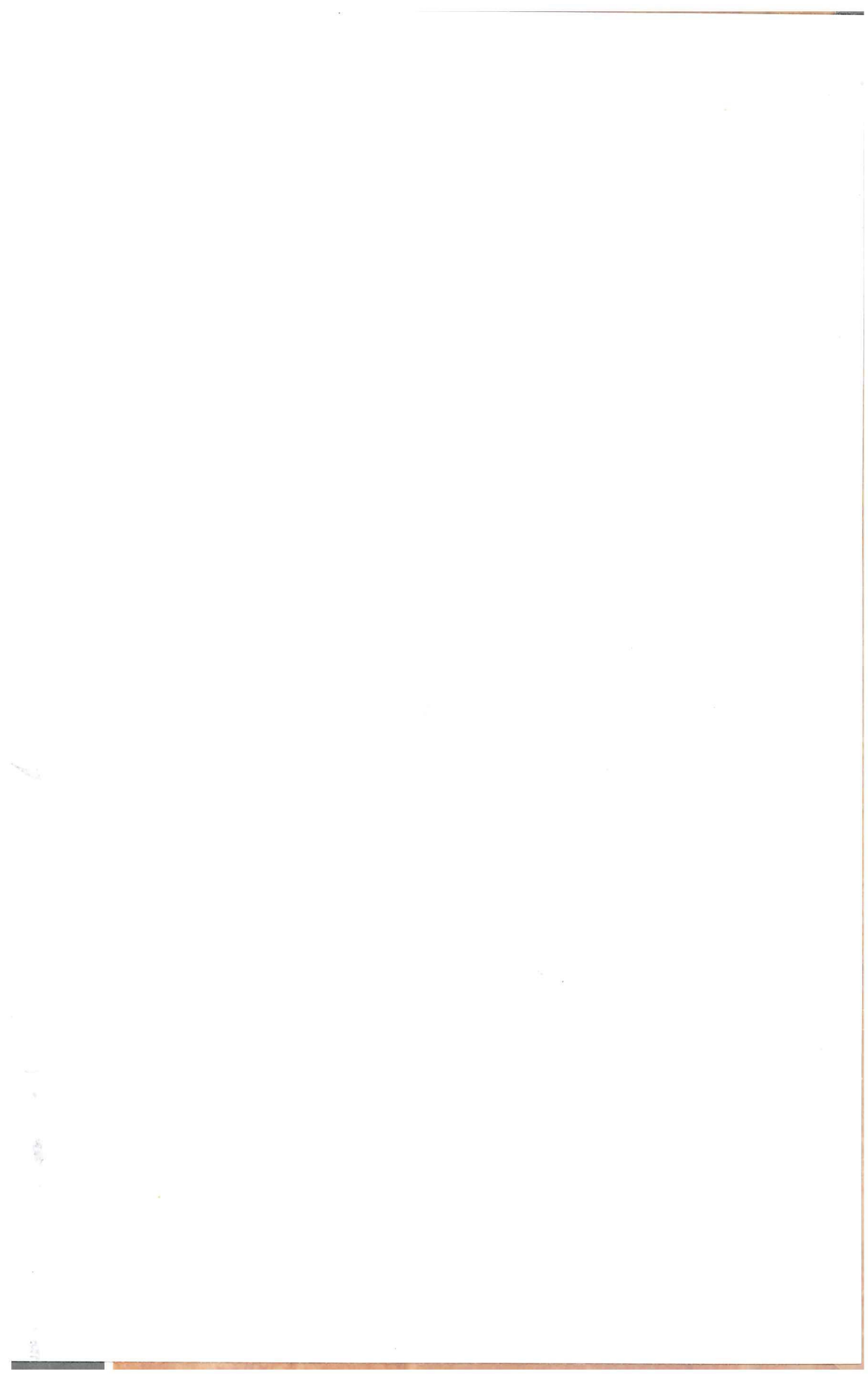
in Medieval England and Abroad



edited by Sarah Rees Jones

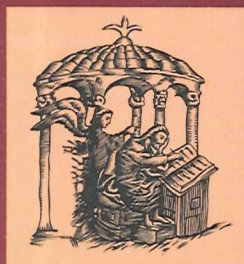
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Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy



One of the most important developments in European history took place in communication. A transition is clearly visible from illiterate societies to societies in which most members are active users of the written word. This complex process, which started in Antiquity, and is still not complete, gained momentum during the Middle Ages. This series is intended to provide a forum for publications on the history of non-verbal, oral and written communication in the Middle Ages. Interest in the subject is now widespread within the worldwide community of medieval studies; and ever more scholars are becoming convinced of the potential of studying the tensions between oral and literate modes of thought.

Learning and Literacy in Medieval England and Abroad

How did people know what they knew, and learn what they learnt? As Derek Pearsall's introduction makes clear this is the primary focus of the collection of essays published in celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the foundation of the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of York.

The learning materials included range from grammar books to mystery plays, and from court records to monastic chronicles, as well as liturgical and devotional texts. But the essays are not only concerned with texts alone, but with the broader and often fluid social environments in which learning took place. Many of the papers therefore question the validity of some distinctions habitually used in the discussion of medieval culture, such as the opposition between orality and literacy, between Latin and the vernacular or between secular and religious.

Cover image taken from the St Ann and the Virgin panel
from All Saints' Church, North Street, York.

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LEARNING AND LITERACY IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND AND ABROAD

UTRECHT STUDIES IN MEDIEVAL LITERACY

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Preface

How did people know what they knew, and learn what they learnt? As Derek Pearsall's introduction makes clear this is the primary focus of the collection of essays published in *Learning and Literacy in Medieval England and Abroad* in celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the foundation of the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of York.

The learning materials included range from grammar books to mystery plays, and from court records to monastic chronicles, as well as liturgical and devotional texts. But the essays are not only concerned with texts alone, but with the broader and often fluid social environments in which learning took place. Many of the papers therefore question the validity of some distinctions habitually used in the discussion of medieval culture, such as the opposition between orality and literacy, between Latin and the vernacular or between secular and religious.

The contributors are literary scholars and historians, most of whom completed their post-graduate work at the University of York. They include Joyce Hill, John Arnold, Linda Olson, Janet Burton, Patricia Cullum, Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, Deborah Cannon, Pamela King, and Stacey Gee. We are also very pleased to include Katherine Zieman's essay in this volume.

Abbreviations

<i>EETS</i>	<i>Early English Text Society</i>
<i>OS</i>	<i>Original Series</i>
<i>ES</i>	<i>Extra Series</i>
<i>SS</i>	<i>Supplementary Series</i>
<i>MIGNE, PL</i>	<i>J.-P. MIGNE (ed.), Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina</i>
<i>MP</i>	<i>Modern Philology</i>
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</i>
<i>SP</i>	<i>Studies in Philology</i>

Introduction

DEREK PEARSALL

Of all the things that were important about the Centre for Medieval Studies at York from its inception in 1968 and that were separable from the unique personal inspiration and scholarly presence of its true 'onlie begetter', the late Professor Elizabeth Salter, the most important was its generosity and openness to interdisciplinary and multicultural initiatives. The range of options that it offered to students in its programmes for the MA in Medieval Studies gave precedence at times to literature, or to drama, or to history (whether local, English, or European), or to art-history (especially stained glass), or, at a later date, to archaeology, but always there was an insistence on awareness of the other disciplines. Some of the best work that was done in the master's programme was genuinely and profoundly interdisciplinary, and many D.Phil. students began with this as their foundation.

It is a measure of the success of the York experiment – though not of that experiment alone – that these efforts at interdisciplinarity no longer have to be made with such strenuous self-consciousness. The boundaries between the disciplines have become more porous. There are few historians now who would not expect to act as textual critics or hermeneuticists in their reading of historical documents; and there are few scholars of literary texts who would not be consistently aware of the need to place texts in their networks of historical exchange and circumstance. In fact, the 'historian', the 'art-historian', and the 'literary critic', whom we used to think of as different animals who could only be induced to cohabit by the influence of some Orphean harmony, have now all become 'social historians', with the emphasis, now here, now there, on different kinds of text and document and artefact.

Looking at these pieces of writing, brought together as part of the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Centre, I am struck by some of the things that have remained unchanged in the work done at the Centre – the energy of the engagement with scholarship, the readiness to embrace fresh ideas, the meticulousness of the close detailed research – but also by the way things have moved on. The questions being asked in these essays on *Learning and Literacy* are not about history, or art-history, or literature, in the old-fashioned sense (“what happened?” “what are the stylistic affiliations?” “what does this mean?”), but about issues that are common and central to all the medieval disciplines. If there is one idea that has taken firm hold since those early days, and transformed the map of culture, it is the concern with the means of cultural dissemination and communication. “How did people know what they knew, and learn what they learnt?” And this of course is a question of literacy, considered not as a matter of demographic computation (“how many people were ‘literate’?”) but as an epistemology of learning.

Literacy, in all its multiplicity of senses and valences, is the subject of nearly all of the essays here, and in every case the guiding motive, the impetus, is the desire to question or to break down some habitual distinction, some polarity that has come to be too readily accepted as a structure of historical thinking. Something of the mode of operation, in relation to the familiar opposition of Latin *vs* vernacular, can be discerned in Joyce Hill’s essay on Latin in late Anglo-Saxon England, which is principally about Aelfric’s *Colloquy*. She reminds us of the complexity of the relation of Latin and Anglo-Saxon in the late Anglo-Saxon period, of the absence of any vernacular triumphalism, of a coexistence between Latin and Anglo-Saxon, rather than the rise and fall of one or the other. Aelfric, we find, probably did not write the Anglo-Saxon interlinear gloss in the *Colloquy*. But it doesn’t matter much whether he did or not.

John Arnold is concerned with a different oppositional structure, that set up between orality and literacy. He examines the common view that the power of literacy was used as an instrument of regulatory oppression by the inquisitors of Cathar Languedoc. The peasant’s words, in response to a series of questions, were written down: his experience was textualized and became not his own but that of an alien ideology. Arnold shows how one particular “illiterate” peasant managed to counter this familiar orthodoxy by “performing” orality so as to disarm literacy: “I am such a simple person that I couldn’t possibly have thought the thoughts or said the things that your questions imply”. Much more

is at stake here, as Arnold makes clear, than the simple opposition of orality *vs* literacy.

The essay by Pat Cullum examines another familiar oppositional pairing, lay *vs* clerical, and the whole shifting relation between lay and clerical identity in the late Middle Ages in England. With a mass of closely researched evidence, she shows how there were many more married clergy in minor orders, many doing a variety of odd jobs of a semi-secretarial or pedagogic nature, some even bearing arms. Literacy too was ceasing to be a distinctive mark of clerical status. Debbie O'Brien is concerned with the same issue of lay *vs* clerical literacy. London citizens are traditionally said to have been only "pragmatically literate" and to have had little interest in anything other than the practical and mercantile uses of literacy. She shows from an examination of two early fourteenth-century custumals that their interests were in fact far wider than that view would suggest, extending to concerns about good citizenship and civic identity as well as more practical matters. Lay literacy penetrated deep and cannot simply be contrasted with the higher form of clerical literacy. Related to this, at a later period, is the question of the extent of parochial literacy. Pre-Reformation parish libraries are usually assumed to have possessed nothing more than a few service-books, but Stacey Gee finds evidence, in an extensive survey of wills both published and unpublished, of a much wider range of books, including legal and theological texts, grammar books, clerical manuals, and other works of edification.

Of all the traditional oppositional formulae, it is the structuring of male against female literacy that comes in for the sharpest criticism here, and three of the essays put women in the forefront of their investigation in a manner that would have seemed extravagantly innovative or gratuitously marginal thirty years ago but is now mainstream practice. The study of women writers and readers has proved a specially effective way of critiquing and transcending, bending and stretching the traditional boundaries of critical discourse. Linda Olson presents us with the unusual scene of an eleventh-century nun reading a *Liber confortatorius* prepared for her by her spiritual advisor in which she is clearly expected to have knowledge of Augustine's *Confessions* and to be able to emulate its forms of devotion and powers of self-analysis. Aelred of Rievaulx expected his sister, for whom he wrote the *De institutione inclusarum*, to have a similar command of Latin (though acknowledging she is exceptional) and likewise to understand the Augustinian schemes for the excitation of affective devotion and the "textual construction of the self as sinner". Katherine Zieman provides a wealth of similar evidence of the literacy of women

religious in her pioneering study of their reading and singing of the liturgy, and also shrewdly questions some of the widespread assumptions, medieval and modern, about 'literacy' and how they have upheld a particular construction of literacy as a male preserve. With examples from Chaucer, the treatise of *The Chastising of God's Children*, and the liturgical practice of Bridget of Sweden and the nuns of Syon, she shows how "liturgical literacy" was a means through which nuns could achieve the objectives of higher literacy (enhanced powers of devotion) without going through the hoops (like the insistence on *grammatica*) designed by men to keep them out. The emphasis on women's literacy continues in Kathryn Kerby-Fulton's brief study of the manuscript evidence that women may have read Langland's *Piers Plowman*. Unexpectedly – though perhaps not so unexpectedly as all that, given what she calls Langland's "sensitivity to women's issues" – she finds at least six manuscripts with names of women readers or owners or with women's signatures. The prize exhibit is Bodleian Library MS Digby 145, with annotation by an early sixteenth-century husband-and-wife team.

Finally, the work of two York-trained scholars of now quite mature achievement (though all of course seem young in years to me!) demonstrates another kind of continuity at York – the tenacious hold that the city and the region have on those who have done their postgraduate research there, and the desire it instils in them to investigate its culture further. I can also use these two essays, without stretching too many points, to reiterate an argument that I made earlier about the convergence of the activities of historians and literary scholars. Janet Burton, author of a classic study of Yorkshire monastic history, writes here about the composition of a *Historia* for Selby Abbey in 1174. It celebrates the role of St Germanus in its foundation, and may even, she suggests, have been in part a northern response to the southern cult of Becket. Here, then, is a historian working with a text only marginally historical which yet constitutes a large part or even the whole of the historical reality: not "what happened", but "why was this history written?" (another kind of "what happened?" of course). Pam King, meanwhile, turns from the work of the traditional drama scholar on the text and theatrecraft of the *York Plays* to concentrate on the importance of the liturgy and the sacraments in the structure of the cycle. It is not, she points out, a systematic programme of instruction, but there are two plays directly bearing on the sacraments (Baptism and the Eucharist) and enough allusions and resonances elsewhere to keep the theme of the sacraments always present in the audience's mind. A mass of supporting iconographic evidence is brought to bear, though there is a welcome reluctance to

overstate the case. I think this latter to be a quality of scholarship more rare than one might be entitled to expect, and wholly admirable. It is a quality of mature scholarship, and it is a quality widely evidenced in this excellent collection.

Learning Latin in Anglo-Saxon England: Traditions, Texts and Techniques

JOYCE HILL

In the Old English preface to his Latin *Grammar*, the homilist Ælfric, monk and mass priest at the Benedictine foundation of Cerne Abbas, rightly equated the learning of Latin with the acquisition of literacy.¹ Recognising the practical realities of the situation in Anglo-Saxon England, however, he had written a *Grammar* in which Latin would be taught through the medium of English, by means of which, as he explains, literacy in both languages would be acquired. Acknowledging by implication that the ability to read English would naturally come first, he describes the art of letters, Old English “*stæf-cræft*”, Latin “*grammatica*”, as the key for unlocking the sense of his own *Catholic Homilies*, that compendium of orthodox, patristically-based biblical exegesis and doctrinal exposition which he had adapted (his own term is “translated”) from Latin authorities not long before, and through which he hoped to raise the standards of pastoral teaching and transmit some of the scholarship of the monastic reform to the secular church, where, as we know from Ælfric’s *Pastoral Letters*, there were priests who knew no Latin.² For Ælfric, learning

¹ *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar*, ed. J. ZUPITZA (Berlin, 1880), reprinted with a preface by H. GNEUSS (Berlin, 1966), pp. 2-3.

² For a discussion of what Ælfric meant by “translation” in connection with the *Catholic Homilies*, see: J. HILL, “Translating the tradition: manuscripts, models and methodologies in the composition of Ælfric’s *Catholic Homilies*”, *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 79 (1997), pp. 43-65. (Also published separately as the Toller Memorial Lecture for 1996.) On the standards of learning assumed within the *Pastoral Letters*, see: J. HILL, “Monastic reform and the secular church: Ælfric’s pastoral letters in context”, in: *England in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. C. HICKES (Stamford, 1992), pp. 103-117. The standard editions of the texts referred to are: *Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies: The*

meant Christian learning and for him personally, the key to it was knowledge of Latin; The transmission of such learning through the vernacular was a decided second best and a contingency which repeatedly gave him a great deal of anxiety.³ The use of the vernacular was a legitimate option in some circumstances, and Ælfric had a model in his revered teacher Æthelwold,⁴ but Latin could not be avoided: it was the indispensable foundation subject, the language of learning and 'real' literacy, and the language of the church, which was the guardian of scholarship in early medieval Europe. My purpose here is to examine some of the traditions, texts and techniques by which the Anglo-Saxons struggled to master this language of literacy and learning, the language which unites and characterises medieval Europe. It is, of course, a huge topic, even within the confines of the Anglo-Saxon period. My focus will be on the response by Anglo-Saxons to local needs, and in particular on Ælfric's grammatical works and their varying reception by his fellow Anglo-Saxons, and by modern scholars.

We have first to understand that, in England, there was a particular pedagogical problem to be addressed, for which a measure of innovation was essential, since Latin was so far removed from the Germanic vernacular that it had to be learnt and maintained in a situation of linguistic disjunction, always as a hard-won, bookish second language. In this respect the linguistic conditions in England were significantly different from the conditions prevailing in those areas of the old Roman Empire where the evolving vernacular was a development of vulgar Latin, for in these areas the formal Latin that was learnt in the process of acquiring literacy existed on a continuous spectrum with the native

First Series. Text, ed. P. CLEMOES (Oxford, 1997: *EETS* SS 17); *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series. Text*, ed. M. GODDEN (London, 1979: *EETS* SS 5); *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, ed. B. FEHR (Hamburg, 1914: *Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa* 9), reprinted with a supplementary introduction by P.A.M. CLEMOES (Darmstadt, 1964).

³ Ælfric's anxieties were most fully expressed in his: *Preface to Genesis: The Old English Version of the Heptateuch*, *Ælfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament and his Preface to Genesis*, ed. S.J. CRAWFORD (London, 1922: *EETS* OS 160), pp. 76-80. But see also: *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series*, p. 345, for the various places throughout the homilies where he declines to provide certain material in English, and *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. W.W. SKEAT (Oxford, 1881-1900; reprinted as 2 volumes, Oxford, 1966: *EETS* OS 76, 82, 94, 114), I, pp. 2-4. Notker of St Gall expressed a similar anxiety when writing to Bishop Hugo von Sitten (c.1015): R. COPELAND, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 97-99. See Copeland's chapters 1, 2 and 4 for comments on the problem of translation in the classical and patristic and early medieval periods.

⁴ See below: p. 16.

language.⁵ Thus, in Francia, for example, perhaps up until the tenth century, and in parts of southern Europe for rather longer still, the difficulty of language learning in the context of learning literacy was nowhere near as great as it was in Anglo-Saxon England. In these regions, the tried and tested texts and pedagogical practices which had developed in classical and late-antique times remained accessible and thus usable. There were established grammars, of varying levels of difficulty, and glossaries and practice dialogues or colloquies, many of which had been developed for Latin language-teaching in the Graeco-Latin bilingual context of the late imperial and early Christian period.⁶ In what was to be the Romance-language area, these well-tested texts remained useful, even though, in the Carolingian period, there is some sense of a rearguard action being mounted as the formally educated become increasingly aware of a growing linguistic disjunction within their own culture, between their learned Latin and the rustic Latin of the laity. Their response to that situation is part of the immediate context for the work of Ælfric, and I shall return to it later.

For the moment, however, I want to stay in the earlier part of the period and focus on the Insular (Celtic as well as Anglo-Saxon) early response to the language problem which was brought about by the conversion to Christianity. The traditional language-teaching texts were, of course, introduced to England along with the introduction of Latin itself, some of them already responsive to Christian needs. But they were less serviceable in England than in continental Europe because of the nature of the native language. The innovative response,

⁵ For more detailed discussion of the situation summarised in the remainder of this paragraph, see: *Latin and the Romance Languages in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. R. WRIGHT (University Park, 1991); M. BANNIARD, *Viva voce; communication écrite et communication orale du IV^e au IX^e siècle en occident latin* (Paris, 1992); IDEM, "Language and communication in Carolingian Europe", in: *The New Cambridge Medieval History: II. c. 700 – c. 900*, ed. R. MCKITTERICK (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 695-708; B. BISCHOFF, *Manuscripts and Libraries in the Age of Charlemagne*, trans. M.M. GORMAN (Cambridge, 1994), especially chapter 5: "Libraries and schools in the Carolingian revival of learning", pp. 93-114; V. LAW, "The study of grammar", in: *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. R. MCKITTERICK (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 88-110; IDEM, *Grammar and Grammarians in the Early Middle Ages* (London and New York, 1997).

⁶ Bilingual materials in Greek and Latin continued to be copied in continental Europe and Anglo-Saxon England, where, from the Carolingian period onwards, they were useful in fostering the hermeneutic style of Latin (on which, see below: pp. 21-23). For an example in London, British Library, MS Harley 3826, written in the late tenth or early eleventh century, possibly at Abingdon, and a list of the continental manuscripts of this text, see H. GNEUSS, "A grammarian's Greek-Latin glossary in Anglo-Saxon England", in: *From Anglo-Saxon to Early Middle English: Studies presented to E.G. Stanley*, ed. M. GODDEN, D. GRAY and T. HOAD (Oxford, 1994), pp. 60-86.

within the space of three or four generations, was to develop grammars expressly designed for those whose native language was not Latin or an evolved form of Latin.⁷ They still had the disadvantage of being written in Latin, but at least in the elementary ones the paradigms and examples were systematically set out with a minimum of commentary, features which are not characteristic of the major grammars of the antique world. For the more advanced student there were exegetical grammars which explained the grammatical phenomena they had already encountered – also developments from classical traditions, but of that branch concerned more with rhetoric, metrics and theoretical linguistics: Donatus's *Ars Maior*, we might say, rather than his elementary *Ars Minor*, which dealt only with the parts of speech. These early grammatical works are not the subject of the present study, but I draw attention to them in order to establish two fundamental points: that the Anglo-Saxons had particular difficulties in teaching and learning Latin which, at this date, were not experienced to the same extent by most of the old Western Roman Empire; and that there was a tradition of pedagogical innovation in responding to that need, even as early as the eighth century, when the first of the 'new' elementary grammars made their appearance.

The next innovation in initial language learning texts by an Anglo-Saxon writer was not to come until after the Viking invasions when, prompted by the Benedictine Reform with its renewed commitment to the study of Latin, testified by the importation of texts and the survival of classbooks of various kinds,⁸ Ælfric produced a *Grammar*, *Glossary* and *Colloquy*,⁹ probably be

⁷ V. LAW, *The Insular Latin Grammarians* (Woodbridge, 1982). See also: IDEM, *Grammar and Grammarians*.

⁸ H. GNEUSS, "Anglo-Saxon libraries from the conversion to the Benedictine reform", *Angli e Sassoni al di qua e al di là del mare* (Spoleto, 1986: *Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 32), pp. 643-699; and: M. LAPIDGE, "Schools, learning and literature in tenth-century England", *Il secolo di ferro: mito e realtà del secolo X* (Spoleto, 1991: *Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 38), pp. 951-1005, provide complementary overviews. For imported manuscripts, see: F.A. RELL, "Continental manuscripts acquired for English centers in the tenth and early eleventh centuries: a preliminary checklist", *Anglia* 98 (1980), pp. 107-116. There is also some information in: H. GNEUSS, "A preliminary list of manuscripts written or owned in England up to 1100", *Anglo-Saxon England* 9 (1981), pp. 1-60, but there are manuscripts listed here with a note of their Anglo-Saxon provenance without reference to their continental origin, so that the extent of the importation is understated. For classbooks, see: A.G. RIGG and G.R. WIELAND, "A Canterbury classbook of the mid-eleventh century", *Anglo-Saxon England* 4 (1975), pp. 113-130; *Latin and the Vernacular Languages in Early Medieval Britain*, ed. N. BROOKS (Leicester, 1982), in particular the articles by: M. LAPIDGE, "The study of latin texts in late Anglo-Saxon England [1]: the evidence of latin glosses", pp. 99-140; and R.I. PAGE, "The Study of Latin Texts in late Anglo-Saxon England [2]:

tween 992 and 1002, when he was monk and mass priest at Cerne Abbas.¹⁰ Only the *Grammar* has contextualising prefatory material by Ælfric and it concludes with the words “*Sy þeos boc ðus her geendod*” (“Let this book thus here be ended”).¹¹ There is no comment in any manuscript of the *Glossary* or *Colloquy* which indicates a formal relationship to any other text. But all seven of the extant copies of the *Glossary* nonetheless appear with the *Grammar*, which suggests that a formal, manuscript relationship was recognised as pedagogically useful.¹² The *Colloquy*, which is attributed to Ælfric by his pupil Ælfric Bata,¹³ is somewhat different in kind. Unlike the *Grammar* and *Glossary*, which present grammatical and lexical elements of Latin in a systematic way, the *Colloquy* is an example of the next stage in language learning, when the systematically acquired linguistic phenomena are put into practice and fluency is tested. We may see the trio of texts as a graded set of instructional tools which perhaps represent Ælfric’s own pedagogy, and we can recognise in them a degree of interconnectedness of language and pedagogical intent which suggests that, in Ælfric’s hands at least, they could be exploited as a linguistically self-referential instructional sequence. As such, they stand within a tradition going back to the days of imperial bi-lingualism, when glossary and colloquy supplemented formal grammatical instruction by extending vocabulary and providing a model dialogue in which could be exercised the grammatical rules and the student’s lexical store in a practical and idiomatic mode.¹⁴

the Evidence of English Glosses”, pp. 141-165; G. WIELAND, “The glossed manuscript: classbook or library book?”, *Anglo-Saxon England* 14 (1985), pp. 153-173.

⁹ Ælfric, *Colloquy*, ed. G.N. GARMONSWAY (London, 1939; second edition, 1947). For the edition of the *Grammar* and *Glossary*, see note 1 above.

¹⁰ P.A.M. CLEMOES, “The chronology of Ælfric’s works”, in: *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in some Aspects of their History and Culture presented to Bruce Dickins*, ed. P.A.M. CLEMOES (London, 1959), pp. 212-247, p. 244.

¹¹ *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar*, p. 296.

¹² See below, p. 25.

¹³ The attribution, in the form of a Latin note, is at the head of Ælfric Bata’s augmented version of Ælfric’s *Colloquy* in Oxford, St John’s College, MS 154, on which, see below, pp. 19-20. Ælfric Bata identifies Ælfric as having been “*meus magister*”, “my teacher”.

¹⁴ For examples of classical colloquies, see: *Anthologia latina sive poesis latinae supplementum*. 1. *Carmina in codicibus scripta*, ed. A. RIESE, fasc. 1 (Leipzig, 1868). *Carmen* 199, pp. 140-144, provides a telling contrast with the *Colloquy* of Ælfric: although there is a sequence of speeches, which are clearly vocabulary exercises, followed by an adjudication by Vulcan (lines 95-99), the exchange lacks the variety and allusion to daily life which is characteristic of Ælfric’s, and there is further formality in that it is in verse, whilst Ælfric’s is in prose. The scholarship on Greek-Latin bilingual instructional manuals is extensive. A sense of the traditions and their transmission to medieval Europe may be had from: A. BATAILLE, “Les

The obvious novelty of the *Grammar* is that it is written in English, the first ever, and the only one for centuries to come.¹⁵ We should not, however, deduce from this that it is a book for absolute beginners, despite Ælfric's apologetic remarks in the Latin preface about its elementary nature,¹⁶ because he assumes that the "*pueruli tenelli*" ("tender little boys") who will use it have already gone through the eight parts of speech in Donatus's *Ars Minor*, a standard elementary text of the mid-fourth-century which sets out in question and answer form a summary of the most important features of each part of speech in the traditional order of noun, pronoun, verb, adverb, participle, conjunction, preposition, and interjection. In fact Ælfric claims that he has produced a modified translation of what was used in the school of his teacher Æthelwold, who was one of the leading Benedictine reformers and Bishop of Winchester (963-984). This work is identified in the Latin preface as "*has excerptiones de Prisciano minore uel maiore*" ("these excerpts from the greater and lesser Priscian") but this is a statement which needs careful interpretation. Priscian was active in Constantinople in the reign of Anastasius (491-518) and produced a monumental grammatical treatise in eighteen books, the *Institutiones grammaticae*, and a number of other grammatical works, but the *Excerptiones de Prisciano* to which Ælfric alludes is not an *ad hoc* compilation of extracts from these. It is, rather, an intermediate-level grammar which fuses together material from Priscian's various treatises, Donatus's *Ars minor*, and at least one other unidentified medieval source.¹⁷ The title, which appears with some

glossaires gréco-latins sur papyrus", *Recherches de Papyrologie* 4 (Paris, 1967: *Travaux de l'institut papyrologie de Paris* 5), pp. 161-169; A.C. DIONISOTTI, "Greek grammars and dictionaries in Carolingian Europe", in: *The Sacred Nectar of the Greeks: The Study of Greek in the West in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. M.W. HERREN (London, 1988: *King's College London Medieval Studies* 2), pp. 1-56; G.N. GARMONSWAY, "The development of the colloquy", in: *The Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 248-261.

¹⁵ H. GNEUSS, "The study of language in Anglo-Saxon England", *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 72 (1990), pp. 3-32 (also separately published as "The 1989 Toller Memorial Lecture"), provides a context for Ælfric's *Grammar*. See also: D.A. BULLOUGH, "The educational tradition in England from Alfred to Ælfric: teaching *utriusque linguae*", in: IDEM, *Carolingian Renewal: Sources and Heritage* (Manchester 1991), pp. 297-334 (a revised version of an article originally published in 1972).

¹⁶ For the Latin preface, see: *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar*, pp. 1-2. It is also edited by: J. WILCOX, *Ælfric's Prefaces* (Durham, 1994), pp. 114-115, and provided with explanatory notes on pp. 151-152 and an English translation on p. 130.

¹⁷ V. LAW, "Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric's *Excerptiones de arte grammatica anglice*", *Histoire Épistémologie Langage* 9 (1987), pp. 47-71. On the different pedagogical needs met by the various works of Donatus and Priscian, see: IDEM, "Late Latin grammars in the early Middle Ages: a typological history", *Historiographia Linguistica* 13 (1986), pp. 365-380. Both articles

variation in medieval booklists and eleventh century manuscripts as well as in Ælfric's preface,¹⁸ has an element of truth in it from a modern point of view because Priscian's work is by far the most extensively exploited. Furthermore, since there are manuscripts of it in which the source-authority for various extracts is indicated in the margin, Priscian's contribution would be plain to see, even for a medieval user. But the title must also be understood as one which lends authority to the work, an authority which, in Ælfric's case, is given local reinforcement by the reference to Æthelwold.

What we actually have here, as Ælfric's immediate source, is a text which should be regarded as a work in its own right. It is of uncertain date and origin, but the manuscript tradition suggests that it is continental¹⁹ and, if this is so, we are dealing with a text which, like so much else, must have come to England with the Benedictine Reform. As a modification of late antique instructional texts, which had previously met the needs of the vulgar Latin language area, it could well be a response to that growing disjunction between rustic Latin and the Latin of the "*eruditi*" which is famously commented upon in canon 17 of the Council of Tours held in 813,²⁰ and which is a cause of continuing concern

are reprinted in: IDEM, *Grammar and Grammarians*. Priscian's *Institutiones* was 'rediscovered' by the Carolingians and Alcuin, among others, made extracts from it. It is in this context of new grammatical compilations drawing upon the *Institutiones* that we should probably see the origins of the *Excerptiones de Prisciano* as a discrete work. On Priscian and the Carolingians, see: IDEM, "The study of grammar", pp. 95-96 (*Grammar and the Grammarians*, pp. 136-137, where the article is reprinted under the title: "The study of grammar under the Carolingians", pp. 129-153.

¹⁸ M.R. JAMES, *The Ancient Libraries of Canterbury and Dover* (Cambridge, 1903) provides three instances from booklists: "*Exceptiones [sic] de Prisciano*" (item 17, discussed p. xxvii); "*Expositiones de Prisciano exposite Anglice*" (item 297, p. 50); "*Excepciones de Prisciano, a*" (item 302, p. 51). James also notes (pp. xxvii-xxviii) that the copy of Ælfric's *Grammar* now preserved as Cambridge University Library, MS Hh. 1. 10 has a note "*Excerpta ex Prisc*" on the back. This is in an eighteenth century hand and was done when the fly-leaves were destroyed in rebinding. It may therefore reflect an earlier, possibly medieval, title or designation of contents. James observes that this is not the natural title for Ælfric's *Grammar*, but we know now that it is indeed an apt designation, given Ælfric's own identification of his text in the *Grammar*'s Latin preface, our modern understanding of his immediate source, and the fact that some of the other expositions or excerpts of Priscian listed later by James and identified as being in English ("*anglice*" or "*a*") are more than likely to be copies of Ælfric's work. There is also an eleventh century copy of the *Excerptiones*, probably made in Abingdon, which begins "*Incipiunt excerptiones de Prisciano*". One of the copies of Ælfric's *Colloquy* (the Antwerp-London manuscript) survives in the margin of this text, see below: pp. 19-20 and p. 25.

¹⁹ LAW, "Ælfric's *Excerptiones*", p. 52 (*Grammar and Grammarians*, p. 204).

²⁰ *Concilium Turonense a. 813*, ed. in: *Concilia aevi Karolini*, ed. A. WERMINGHOFF, 2 parts, 1 (Hannover, 1908: *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Concilia II*), pp. 286-293, p. 288. The Council specified that preachers should "openly endeavour to translate sermons into the

in successive continental councils of the ninth century.²¹ As a *compilatio* both in practice and presentation (through title and marginalia) the *Excerptiones de Prisciano* is entirely in harmony with other products of the Carolingian reform, such as the exegetical *compilationes*, similarly constructed and presented, which also came to England with the Benedictine Reform, and which Ælfric used extensively.²² The Carolingian Reform certainly provided a powerful impetus for grammatical compilations and practice texts, because grammar was recognised, as it had been since late antique Christianity, as the necessary means of penetrating the mysteries of sacred literature and the first step towards “*divina sapientia*”. Improved knowledge of Latin grammar, straightforwardly equated with improved literacy since Latin was the only language under consideration, was a major item on Charlemagne’s agenda, as set out in his *Admonitio generalis* of 789 and the *Epistola de litteris colendis*, which he sent to Abbot Baugulf of Fulda (780-802) and other ecclesiastics. Those who had any aptitude for learning or teaching were to be set to the task, in order to overcome the fear that

rustic Roman language” (“*aperte transferre studeat in rusticam romanam linguam*”) so that “all might the more easily understand” (“*quo facilius cuncti possint intelligere*”). It is in such a context that those who were attempting to attain a respectable level of literate latinity would need instructional material which was no longer quite what the classical world had devised. The value for Anglo-Saxon England of such modified materials would be all the more evident, given the complete linguistic disjunction between Latin and the Germanic vernacular. For a discussion of the significance of canon 17, see: BANNIARD, *Viva voce*, pp. 405-413. IDEM, “Language and communication”, pp. 699-701.

²¹ John Contreni draws attention to the Council of Mainz in 847: “The Carolingian Renaissance: education and literary culture”, in: *New Cambridge Medieval History: II*, pp. 709-757, pp. 725-726.

²² For Ælfric, see: C.L. SMETANA, “Ælfric and the early medieval homiliary”, *Traditio* 15 (1959), pp. 163-204; and a number of my own articles, in particular: “Ælfric and Smaragdus”, *Anglo-Saxon England* 21 (1992), pp. 203-237; “Ælfric’s sources reconsidered: Some case studies from the *Catholic Homilies*”, in: *Studies in English Language and Literature. “Doubt Wisely”: Papers in honour of E.G. Stanley*, ed. M.J. TOSWELL and E.M. TYLER (London and New York, 1996), pp. 362-386; and “Translating the tradition”. On *compilatio* and *catena* more generally, see: J. CONTRENI, “Carolingian biblical studies”, in: *Carolingian Essays: Andrew W. Mellon Lectures in Early Christian Studies* (Washington, 1983), pp. 71-98; BISCHOFF, *Manuscripts and Libraries*, pp. 109-113; G. BROWN, “Introduction: the Carolingian Renaissance”, in: *Carolingian Culture*, pp. 1-51, pp. 39-42; M. IRVINE, *The Making of Textual Culture: “Grammatica” and Literary Theory, 350-1100* (Cambridge, 1994); IDEM, “Medieval textuality and the archaeology of textual culture”, in: *Speaking Two Languages: Traditional Disciplines and Contemporary Theory in Medieval Studies*, ed. A.J. FRANTZEN (Albany, 1991), pp. 181-210; J. HILL, *Bede and the Benedictine Reform* (Jarrow, 1998: Jarrow Lecture).

sicut minor erat in scribendo prudentia, ita quoque et multo esset quam recte esset debuisset in sanctorum scripturarum ad intelligendum sapientia.

as skill in writing was less, wisdom to understand the sacred scriptures might be far less than it ought rightly to be.²³

In seeing *grammatica* as the key to scriptural understanding, in urging those who could to teach and to learn, and in providing instruction on the basis of what is probably a Carolingian grammatical text, Ælfric shows himself, as he does in almost all his work, to be inspired by the Carolingian reform and up-to-date in his choice of immediate sources, although characteristically the Old English version which Ælfric gives us is far from being a translation as we would understand it. Vernacular grammatical terms had to be developed, examples were introduced which appealed to the experience and interests of his pupils (a practice also found in Carolingian texts), and the content of the *Excerptiones* was modified by the incorporation of a more comprehensive treatment of paradigms, and the exclusion or drastic reduction in material of the more rhetorical and metrical elements. The result is a practical working *Grammar*, well adjusted to local need, simpler than the Latin *Excerptiones*, but not as basic as the *Ars Minor*, which the boys had already mastered. What we do not know, of course, is the extent to which the changes had already been made in the “*scola Æthelwoldi*”, where they could have been stabilised either in written form for reference, or orally by constant repetition in a recurrent pedagogical context such as gave rise to Winchester vocabulary.²⁴ Nor do we know whether Ælfric’s own teacher Æthelwold, whose traditions he expressly embodies in the *Grammar*, had already developed some of the vernacular technical terms which the *Grammar* employs. The *Vita Æthelwoldi* describes a context in which this would be possible since it records that:

²³ *Epistola de litteris colendis*, ed. A. BORETIUS, in: *Capitularia regum Francorum*, ed. A. BORETIUS and V. KRAUSE, 2 vols. (Hannover, 1883-1897: *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Capitularia regum Francorum I-II*), I, No. 29, pp. 78-79, p. 79. *Admonitio generalis*, ed. BORETIUS, in: *Capitularia regum Francorum I*, No. 22, pp. 52-62.

²⁴ H. GNEUSS, “The origin of standard Old English and Æthelwold’s school at Winchester”, *Anglo-Saxon England* 1 (1972), pp. 63-83; W. HOFSTETTER, *Winchester und der spätmittelenglische Sprachgebrauch: Untersuchungen zur geographischen und zeitlichen Verbreitung altenglischer Synonyme* (Munich, 1987: *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Englischen Philologie* 14); IDEM, “Winchester and the standardization of Old English vocabulary”, *Anglo-Saxon England* 17 (1988), pp. 139-161.

Dulce namque erat ei adolescentes et iuuenes semper docere, et Latinos libros Anglice eis soluere, et regulas grammaticae artis ac metricae rationis tradere, et iocundis alloquiis ad meliora hortari.

It was always agreeable to him to teach young men and the more mature students, translating Latin texts into English for them, passing on the rules of grammar and metric, and encouraging them to do better by cheerful words.²⁵

The *Glossary*, as a word-list for extending vocabulary, is also, of course, a bilingual text, by its very nature; it is arranged as a class-glossary (*i.e.* words are alphabetised within subject-groups), an organisational principle which would be convenient for initial learning, the development of subsequent practice dialogues and later reference.

The *Colloquy*, which exercises what has been learnt in the more abstract form offered by the *Grammar* and *Glossary*, is necessarily monolingual, the Old English interlinear gloss-translation through which it has become famous not being by Ælfric.²⁶ The tradition in which it stands is that of the schoolroom dialogue for a learnt language familiar from classical times.²⁷ In these dialogues it is normal for roles to be adopted by the scholars and their teacher, for there to be extensive lists which exercise vocabulary, for much of the dialogue to describe daily activities through a question and answer exchange and, in the more developed examples, for there to be a debate, which is adjudicated by some kind of *consiliarius* figure. Ælfric's *Colloquy* is a very well constructed example of the genre, but he has developed the tradition in a distinctive way by extending the breadth of the occupational reference: the typical scholastic colloquy at this level is more commonly concerned with the practicalities of the scholars' own daily lives. Ælfric's *Colloquy* has this dimension – the dialogue

²⁵ Wulfstan of Winchester, *The Life of St Æthelwold*, ed. M. LAPIDGE and M. WINTERBOTTOM (Oxford, 1991), pp. 46–49 (Latin and English). Ælfric produced an abbreviated version of Wulfstan's *vita* but regarded the information that Æthelwold used the vernacular when teaching as important enough to be retained, although he does not specify that the books are Latin ones (the implication is clear enough, however), and he omits the reference to Æthelwold's teaching of the rules of grammar and metre (p. 77: Ælfric's chapter 20, drawing on Wulfstan's chapter 31).

²⁶ On this point and on the *Colloquy*'s pedagogical principles, which are summarised in this paragraph, see: J. HILL, "Winchester pedagogy and the *Colloquy* of Ælfric", *Leeds Studies in English* n.s. 29 (1998), pp. 137–152.

²⁷ See note 14 above. For the texts of prose colloquies from Anglo-Saxon England, with introductory studies of the tradition, see: *Latin Colloquies from Pre-Conquest Britain*, ed. S. GWARA (Toronto, 1996); *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Ælfric Bata*, ed. S. GWARA, translated with an introduction by D.W. PORTER (Woodbridge, 1997).

begins and ends in the schoolroom and the daily life of the young monk is given prominence – but we also move beyond the cloister in hearing about the occupations of the ploughman, shepherd, oxherd, hunter, fisher, fowler, merchant, leather-worker (shoemaker), salter, baker, and cook, with a few additional occupations being introduced as the colloquy progresses. The variety has the pedagogical advantages of broadening the linguistic range, allowing for a high level of participation, and providing stimulating and challenging opportunities for changes of register, levels of discourse, and even dramatic characterisation of a modest kind. It is also an excellently constructed practice text in that the boys' answers to the basic questions about the occupations naturally include lists inevitably arranged by subject, which thus exercise vocabulary in a way which is straightforwardly related to the *Glossary*, whilst at the same time this variety is carefully counterbalanced with a repetitious exercising of the common bases of Latin grammar, with dramatically justifiable changes of case, person, tense and mood, embodied where possible in the sample vocabulary through which these features were abstractly presented in the *Grammar*. Ælfric does not, for example, concern himself with lexical diversity when dealing with common actions such as “to speak”, “to sing”, and “to catch”, but uses, in their various forms as required by the dialogue, the verbs “*loquor*”, “*cantare*” and “*capere*”, which are the models in the *Grammar*. This is the interconnectedness which I referred to earlier, and which defines the context of the *Colloquy* as being primarily textual, within a linguistically self-referential instructional sequence.

Yet there have been many times when *The Colloquy* has been read at face value as a simple sociological document. In 1838 it was cited (and partly translated) by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in order to comfort the suffering students of his own day by offering a selective reading intended to demonstrate that, if school was a grim business in the mid-nineteenth century, it was nevertheless a great deal better than it had been in Anglo-Saxon times.²⁸ If this reading, at a distance of nearly two hundred years, seems too remote, we can turn to a publication of 1920, reissued in 1975, which cites the *Colloquy* in order to prove that flogging was a time-honoured (and therefore presumably justifiable) tradition in English schools.²⁹ In 1915, driven by the then common tendency to

²⁸ H. WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW, “Anglo-Saxon literature”, *North American Review* 47 (1838), pp. 90–134, pp. 132–133 (often reprinted, for example in his: *Poets and Poetry of Europe* (Cambridge, 1845; New York, 1857; 2nd ed. 1871), and his: *Collected Prose* (Boston, 1857; rev. ed. 1866; reprinted 1886, 1894)).

²⁹ A. W. PARRY, *Education in England in the Middle Ages* (London, 1920; reprinted New York, 1975), pp. 37–38.

idealise the Anglo-Saxon period as the time when Englishmen were budding egalitarians and were as yet mercifully untainted by the feudalising Normans, the *Colloquy* was taken as evidence that education was available to all, secular as well as religious, unfree as well as free.³⁰ The wonderful assumption was made that the master was a layman since his questions about the monastic life were taken to indicate that he could not himself be a monk. And to cap it all, it was deduced that the occasion was that most beloved of Victorian and Edwardian institutions, the Sunday School, since the hunter explains that, whilst he went hunting yesterday, he has not been hunting today, because today, when he is in school, is Sunday.

We may well be amused by these naive approaches – and I admit that I have chosen some extreme examples – but it is a striking fact that a substantial proportion of the bibliography on Ælfric's *Colloquy* consists of the whimsical and the misleading, together with repetitious summaries and translations which add nothing to our understanding of the nature of the text, the traditions to which it relates, or the techniques that it deploys. More of a problem, however, are the various editorial treatments of the *Colloquy*, for, as Norman Blake once reminded us, the editor of a text is the most influential critic one reads.³¹

Ælfric's *Colloquy* was written as a Latin dialogue; the Old English gloss which is uniquely interlineated in Cotton Tiberius A iii is not part of Ælfric's pedagogic purpose and is demonstrably not by him.³² Yet it is the Old English gloss which earns the *Colloquy* a place in histories of vernacular literature, and a secure position also in Anglo-Saxon Readers, from the nineteenth century right up to the present. What students study and translate, however, is often not even the Old English text as it occurs in this one manuscript, but a rewritten version of it, originating with Sweet in 1897, who revised the Old English gloss into idiomatic Old English prose as he understood it.³³ The original

³⁰ A.F. LEACH, *The Schools of Medieval England* (London, 1915), pp. 88–91. The book was reissued in New York in 1968 and 1969.

³¹ N.F. BLAKE, *The English Language in Medieval Literature* (London, 1977), p. 55.

³² See p. 16 and note 26 above. See also pp. 21–22 below for a summary of some of the chief arguments. The layout of 21/22 lines of Latin per page in the Tiberius A iii copy nevertheless suggests that the gloss was anticipated, whether or not it was already in the immediate exemplar. The number of Latin lines per page corresponds with that for the *Benedictine Rule* and the *Regularis Concordia* in the same manuscript, which also have a full Old English interlineated gloss. Other texts in the manuscript are written more densely. The Latin text of the *Colloquy* is written by “scribe 1”, who writes the Latin of the *Regularis Concordia*. The Old English gloss is written by “scribe 3”, who writes the Old English gloss to the *Regularis Concordia*. See: N.R. KER, *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), p. 248.

³³ H. SWEET, *First Steps in Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1897).

would not serve as a free-standing text, since it follows Latin word-order and is inevitably influenced by Latin grammar.³⁴

The copy in Tiberius A iii, which provides the foundation for the Old English text in Anglo-Saxon Readers, is also the basis of the bilingual scholarly edition by Garmonsway.³⁵ But this too, for all the editorial care devoted to it, gives priority to the Old English gloss, presenting this in normal type, with the Latin base-text beneath it in italics in a much smaller point-size. It is as if the Old English is the primary text (which it is, of course, in the Methuen's Old English series, in which – revealingly – it is edited), and as if the Latin is the gloss, but written beneath, rather than above, the text to which it relates.³⁶ Nonetheless, Garmonsway's is the standard edition of the best text of Ælfric's *Colloquy*, in the sense of being the closest to Ælfric, and it is the text to which I have been referring so far. Yet it is itself a modified text in having a non-Ælfrician continuous Old English gloss, and in incorporating some changes to the Latin. Furthermore, it is not the only text, although what survives in addition has often been inaccurately described. Sometimes there is reference to two manuscript witnesses;³⁷ at other times there may be reference to four.³⁸ In reality there are three manuscript witnesses, involving four libraries: Cotton Tiberius A iii, fols. 60v-64v (middle of the eleventh century), the only one with the Old English gloss; St John's College MS 154, fols. 204r-215r³⁹ (early eleventh century), which is an amplified Latin-only version written by Ælfric's pupil, Ælfric Bata; and an incomplete Latin-only version now divided between Ant-

³⁴ C.L. WRENN, *A Study of Old English Literature* (London, 1967), p. 228, who believed that Ælfric provided the interlinear gloss, "perhaps with help from some bright pupils", nevertheless averred that "the simple charm of the Latin is equalled by the grace and colloquial vigour of the English".

³⁵ See note 9 above.

³⁶ In Readers, the Latin is often not printed at all. A.J. FRANTZEN, *Desire for Origins: New Language, Old English, and Teaching the Tradition* (New Brunswick and London, 1990), p. 135, notes the typographical awkwardness in Garmonsway's edition and considers that this makes the function of the text difficult to guess at; his own assumption, nonetheless, is that the *Colloquy* "was used to teach Latin through Old English". This was not part of the original design, however, as I have demonstrated in "Winchester Pedagogy", nor was such a bilingual process a normal feature of the colloquy tradition.

³⁷ For example, from the nineteenth century: B. TEN BRINK, *History of English Literature I*, trans. H.M. KENNEDY (London, 1893), p. 107. From the twentieth: M.W. GROSE and D. MCKENNA, *Old English Literature* (London, 1973), p. 32.

³⁸ S.B. GREENFIELD and D.W. CALDER, *A New Critical History of Old English Literature* (New York and London, 1986), p. 86, refer to "four complete manuscripts".

³⁹ Incorrectly reported on p. 1 of Garmonsway's edition of the *Colloquy* as ending on fol. 221v.

werp and London: Antwerp, Plantin-Moretus Museum, MS M. 16. 2 (*olim* MS 47, with earlier MS numberings 32 and 68), fols. 18r-19v, and London, British Library Additional MS 32246, fols. 18a-19b (early eleventh century), equivalent to Garmonsway's edition, line 1 - "*utimini*", line 184 (Antwerp MS) and "*Int*", line 185 - "*ecclesiam*", line 269 (London MS), with no text being extant for Garmonsway, lines 269-315. This last is similar to the Tiberius copy, although it varies in a number of significant and interesting ways. The St John's copy, in being rewritten and recontextualised, assumes a new identity, although a version of the *Colloquy* as we know it is embedded within it, standing as the platform on which the amplifications are erected. I shall comment on these versions in their medieval milieux below, but before doing so, I want to give one last example of misleading editorial practice.

The St John's College text, which declares itself in a prefatory Latin note to be an amplification made by one of Ælfric's pupils, has been edited once, by Stevenson, in his collection of early medieval scholastic colloquies, published posthumously in 1929.⁴⁰ But what the editor presents, is something that does not exist, and never did exist. Stevenson takes the Latin text from the St John's manuscript (which is his primary concern), conflates this with the Latin text from Cotton Tiberius A iii, whenever the Tiberius copy has something which is not in the St John's manuscript, imports the interlinear Old English gloss from the Tiberius manuscript, presenting it as an interlinear gloss (where applicable) over the editorially modified Latin text from St John's, and adds the interlineated Old English/Latin epilogue from Tiberius A iii, a piece of text which is quite clearly an addition to Ælfric's original, and which therefore cannot be treated as if it is 'lost' from any other copy.

The complexities of Stevenson's editorial construct, which still has the power to deceive as we see from George Brown's 1994 Toller Memorial lecture,⁴¹ oblige us to come to terms directly with the medieval manuscript evidence for Ælfric's *Colloquy*, rather than rely on editorial representations. Here our starting point must be the version in Tiberius A iii, which is generally regarded as the closest to Ælfric's original. Even so, as I have already indi-

⁴⁰ *Early Scholastic Colloquies*, ed. W.H. STEVENSON (Oxford, 1929), pp. 75-102.

⁴¹ Brown refers to the last two items in Stevenson's edition, identifying them as Ælfric's *Colloquy* (without any indication that is a radically rewritten version) and Book III of *Bella Parisiacae urbis* of Abbo of St Germain, a popular study-text. Both are said to be "glossed interlinearly with Old English", although this is correct only for the Abbo item, the Old English gloss to the *Colloquy* being an unjustified editorial feature: G.H. BROWN, "The dynamics of literacy in Anglo-Saxon England", *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 77 (1995), pp. 109-142, p. 140.

cated, some non-authorial modifications can be identified. For example, the Latin names of the fish caught by the fisherman are properly in the accusative as objects of an unspoken verb "*capio*" ("I catch") in response to the question "*Quid capis in mare?*" ("What do you catch in the sea?"), but it is evident that the list has had some extra fish-names inserted.

Alleces et isicios, delfinos et sturias, ostreas et caneros, musculus, torniculi, neptigalli, platesia et platissa et polipodes et similia.⁴²

Herrings and salmon, porpoises and sturgeon, oysters and crabs, mussels, winkles, cockles, plaice and flounder and lobsters and suchlike.

Except for "*sturias*", all of the fish-names which are correctly in the accusative are also in Ælfric's *Glossary*, an intertextual relationship which is in harmony with the *Colloquy*'s pedagogic purpose. By contrast, the names which stand out as subsequent additions are not in Ælfric's *Glossary* and are given ungrammatically in the nominative – "*torniculi*", "*neptigalli*" (both plural), "*platesia*", "*platissa*" (both anomalously singular) – just as they would have appeared in whatever class-glossary they were inattentively copied from. The *Colloquy* in the Tiberius manuscript also has an epilogue which employs a dense selection of hermeneutic vocabulary:⁴³ "*mathites*", "*eruditor*", "*inceditis*", "*morigerate*", "*auscultaveritis*", "*concinite*", and "*gimnasium*", plus a concentration of adverbs in *-iter/-ter*, which is characteristic of this style: "*eleganter*", "*suppliciter*", "*disciplinabiter*" and "*unanimiter*". Furthermore, Ælfric habitually uses "*altare*" for "altar" in his Latin writings, not "*ara*", as here ("*aras*", plural); "*auscultare*", "*ara*" and "*concinire*" are more frequent in verse than in prose; and the precious quality of the style is reinforced by the echo of verse-form in "*eleganter ubique locorum*", which is a metrically perfect end to a hexameter. All of this is at variance with Ælfric's own practice – he assiduously avoided using hermeneutic Latin, even though it was fashionable in the intellectual circles in which he moved – and it is also at odds with *Colloquy*'s internal lexical choices, which have been carefully controlled and pedagogically-determined up to this point, and which, to a high degree, relate

⁴² Ælfric, *Colloquy*, p. 29, lines 106-108. These irregularities were first noted by: J. ZUPITZA, "Die ursprüngliche Gestalt von Ælfric's Colloquium", *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 31 (1887), pp. 32-45, p. 38.

⁴³ I have analysed the language of the Tiberius epilogue in greater detail in "Winchester pedagogy", pp. 144-145. It is slightly detached from the main body of the text in the manuscript. On the style generally, see: M. LAPIDGE, "The hermeneutic style in tenth-century Anglo-Latin literature", *Anglo-Saxon England* 4 (1975), pp. 67-111.

to the examples previously introduced in Ælfric's *Grammar* and *Glossary*, where hermeneutic vocabulary is not employed. Among the various reasons for arguing that the interlineated Old English gloss in this manuscript is not by Ælfric, the most powerful of all is the fact that the gloss runs over those parts of the text which are not his and which would not have been acceptable to him, for reasons of grammar, lexis, or pedagogical technique. In any case, although Ælfric was persuaded, sometimes against his better judgement, that English was a necessary medium for transmitting material which he was familiar with in Latin, he did not use interlinear translation, and it makes no pedagogical sense here.

The Cotton Tiberius A iii manuscript is a puzzling miscellany, once one gets past the systematic, high-status collection of Benedictine Reform texts (Rule, Reform supplements, and *Regularis Concordia*) with which the now disordered manuscript originally began, and so the manuscript gives us practically no guidance on the *use* of this version of the *Colloquy*, except in showing that – since this is a Canterbury manuscript⁴⁴ – the text had made its way to Canterbury from Cerne Abbas, perhaps thanks to Ælfric Bata, who is known to have been at Canterbury – not as an entirely happy member of the community, if he is indeed the Ælfric Bata who was prevented by a vision of St Dunstan from despoiling Christ Church.⁴⁵

The tinkering with the lists and the hermeneutic indulgence in the epilogue are probably attributable to Ælfric Bata. But, if this is so, his intervention here is quite restrained, by comparison with the major rewriting which we find in the St John's manuscript. This Latin-only text draws heavily upon glossaries to augment the lists, taking us into an improbable world where the Anglo-Saxon hunter's prey includes elephants, camels, lions and snails. Ælfric Bata's amplified version is in fact a display-text and it rightly takes its place in the manuscript amongst other abstruse colloquies by the same author, which are similarly vehicles for parading Ælfric Bata's own erudition. If these colloquies have a pedagogical function, and it is probable that they do, it is as exercises in

⁴⁴ As now established by: H. GNEUSS, "Origin and provenance of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts: the case of Cotton Tiberius A. III", in: *Of the Making of Books: Medieval Manuscripts, their Scribes and Readers. Essays presented to M.B. Parkes*, ed. P.R. ROBINSON and R. ZIM (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 13-48.

⁴⁵ The little information we have about Ælfric Bata is summarised by: N. BROOKS, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury* (Leicester, 1984), p. 266, and is reviewed in more detail by: L. KORNEHL, *Die Regularis Concordia und ihre altenglische Interlinearversion* (Munich, 1993), pp. cxxx-cxxxiv.

lexical variation in support of the *recherché* hermeneutic tradition, rather than being practice dialogues of the fundamental kind we see in Ælfric's original.⁴⁶

The Antwerp-London version, which has not yet been fully edited,⁴⁷ is much more like the Tiberius text, though it is in Latin only and it alone has speech designations, beginning with "M" for "Magister" and "D" for "Discipulus", appropriate to the way in which the dialogue begins, and changing to "In" for "Interrogatio" and "R" for "Responsio" as the occupational roles adopted override the master-pupil relationship inherent in the opening exchange about learning Latin and the monastic routine. There are many details which are expansions of those in the Tiberius manuscript, some of them primarily stylistic, and some of them substantive. The stylistic variations include re-arrangements of word order, and the addition of connectives which make the clauses flow more easily; adjectives and adverbs which provide small touches of dramatic colour; and fillers which make the exchanges seem more relaxed and natural. I am only referring to small details here, such as the use of "ergo", "quidam", "autem", "et", "cotidie", "optime", "enim", "dulciter", "innumerabiles" and so on, but they ease the conversation along and are not at all intrusive.

The substantive details are more significant and, of course, much more interesting from a cultural point of view. Here, in the Antwerp-London manuscript, the huntsman explains that he works for the cook or sometimes the lord, by contrast with the Tiberius text, which refers to the king only. We hear – as we do not in Tiberius – that he goes out to hunt in company with many others ("cum multitudine hominum"), that the bear he kills is three years old ("trium annorum"), and that he despatches it with a sharp sword ("cum acuto gladio"),

⁴⁶ Ælfric Bata's pedagogical techniques are discussed by: D.W. PORTER, "The latin syllabus in Anglo-Saxon monastic schools", *Neophilologus* 78 (1994), pp. 463-482, and in his introduction to *Anglo-Saxon Conversations*, as well as by Gwara in the introduction to *Latin Colloquies*. For two hermeneutic dialogues in verse form, composed at Winchester in Æthelwold's school or soon after his death, see: M. LAPIDGE, "Three latin poems from Æthelwold's school at Winchester", *Anglo-Saxon England* 1 (1972), pp. 85-137. The relevant texts are the *Altercatio magistri et discipuli* and the *Responsio discipuli*. The *Carmen de libero arbitrio*, also hermeneutic, is not a dialogue. For discussion of one of the important study-texts for the hermeneutic tradition see: P. LENDINARA, "The third book of the *Bella Parisiacae Urbis* by Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Près", *Anglo-Saxon England* 15 (1986), pp. 73-89. IDEM, "The Abbo glossary in London, British Library, Cotton Domitian i", *Anglo-Saxon England* 19 (1990), pp. 133-149. On the origins of the hermeneutic style in England, see: M. GRETSCH, *The Intellectual Foundations of the English Benedictine Reform* (Cambridge, 1999: *Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England* 25).

⁴⁷ Only the Antwerp part of the text has been published: M. FÖRSTER, "Die altenglische Glossenhandschrift Plantinus 32 (Antwerpen) und Additional 32246 (London)", *Anglia* 41 (1917), pp. 94-161, pp. 147-152.

that he receives clothes and food in return for his labours, and sometimes a gold ring, that food is given to him and his family daily, that the clothes he receives are costly ("*pretiosa*"), and the money not modest ("*non modicam*"). The fisherman in the Antwerp-London manuscript claims that he is the best fisherman and a skilled one ("*Ego optimus sum piscator et ingeniosus*"), in comparison with the plain statement in Tiberius "*Ego sum piscator*", and there is a comment on the great dangers of being at sea. In the Tiberius manuscript the shepherd simply gets up first thing in the morning and drives his sheep to pasture ("*in primo mane mino oues meas ad pascua*") but the Antwerp-London manuscript provides much more detail:

in primo mane surgo de meo lectulo, in manu baculum accipiens, aliquando discalciatus, et mino oues meas ad pascua ...

first thing in the morning I get up from my bed, picking up my staff in my hand, sometimes without my shoes, and I drive my sheep to pasture ...

We similarly hear about the young monk getting out of bed and hastening to the church without his shoes. There is also a more developed exchange in the Antwerp-London manuscript about swapping a trained bird of prey for a hunting dog, although the logic of the exchange indicates that the distribution of sentences among speakers, marked in this manuscript by "*Interrogatio*" and "*Responsio*", is faulty. The scribe seems to have attached "*Int*" for "*Interrogatio*" to a question simply because it was a question. In fact the speaker has not changed at this point, but the scribe pursues his own logic until this exchange has ended, so that for several short speeches the speakers are the wrong way round. On the one hand it suggests that the extended exchange was already in his exemplar, because if he were composing the sentences himself, as an amplification, he would hardly have made this kind of mistake; on the other, it leads one to suppose that it was this scribe who was adding the speech designations as he went along, since the mistake is just the kind that would be made under these circumstances.

Yet, despite the extra material, this is not a rewritten text comparable to Ælfric Bata's St John's text. The lists are not over-extended, hermeneutic vocabulary is not featured, the dramatic effect remains intact, and Ælfric's pedagogic techniques remain as much in evidence here as in Tiberius A iii. David Porter has recently suggested that the modifier or editor of this version is, once again, Ælfric Bata, at this stage controlling the amplifications so as to produce a slightly more demanding colloquy than Ælfric's original, but not yet rewrit-

ing it to make it part of a set of erudite dialogues, as in the version preserved in the St John's manuscript⁴⁸ (although if we accept that we have three versions of the *Colloquy* representing successive acts of modification by Ælfric Bata, it must be understood that the surviving copies are not in direct linear relationship, one with the other). Porter's argument is that, in making the modifications found in the Antwerp-London manuscript, Ælfric Bata was aiming at intermediate students. We must be cautious, however, in drawing from this the conclusion that Ælfric's original audience was operating at an absolutely elementary level: his *Colloquy* exercises *use* of the language which assumes mastery of his own *Grammar*, and that was itself an adaptation of the intermediate-level *Excerptiones de Prisciano*, expressly prepared for those who had completed their elementary study of Donatus.

There are fourteen extant manuscript witnesses to Ælfric's *Grammar*, and in seven of these it is accompanied by the *Glossary*; some of the others are too fragmentary for us to tell whether the *Glossary* appeared alongside or not.⁴⁹ Sometimes they seem to have circulated as a free-standing set. In three of the surviving manuscripts (Durham, Cathedral Library, MS B. III. 32 (s. XI¹), British Library, MS Harley 107 (s. XI^{med}), and British Library, MS Cotton Faustina A. x (s. XI²)) they are associated with a grammatical dialogue, but this is a Latin question and answer routine on the declensions, a common teaching tool, and not a practice dialogue in the colloquy tradition.⁵⁰ By contrast, the *Colloquy*'s three extant versions indicate that it never became popular and did not circulate in a way which would have facilitated its use in conjunction with the *Grammar* and *Glossary* as a means of developing confidence and fluency once the elements of the language had been mastered. However, there was someone who recognised its value as a work to accompany the Latin *Excerptiones de Prisciano*, because the Antwerp-London text survives as a marginal addition to a copy of Ælfric's source-text. Whoever made the connection took advantage of the traditional provision in grammatical treatises of wide margins into which supplementary materials could be transcribed, thus locating it in a context which was intellectually apt, but which was more learned than the one in which Ælfric's *Colloquy* had first been developed.⁵¹

⁴⁸ D.W. PORTER, "Ælfric's *Colloquy* and Ælfric Bata", *Neophilologus* 80 (1996), pp. 639-660.

⁴⁹ The manuscripts are listed by Gneuss on pp. iv-vii of the 1966 reissue of *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar*.

⁵⁰ KER, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, articles 107B, 227 and 154 respectively.

⁵¹ The manuscript as a whole is essentially grammatical, with the *Excerptiones* as the main text. The other contents are a short Latin glossary, a Latin letter to a priest, four short pieces of

On what is now folio 117 of Cotton Tiberius A iii, but what was originally the first folio, there is a list of contents in a hand of the early twelfth century, in which the *Regularis Concordia*, following the Benedictine Rule and the Reform supplements, is listed as "*Regula elurici bate glosata anglice*", and there is an inscription "*Eluricus Bate*" at the head of the page in what is probably an older hand than the table of contents.⁵² The association with Ælfric Bata, no doubt on the evidence of these annotations, was perpetuated in the inventory of Henry of Eastry, Prior of Christ Church (1284-1331). There, as item 296, there is a description of a manuscript which is generally regarded as being Cotton Tiberius A iii:⁵³

No 296: Batte super Regulam beati Benedicti.

In hoc vol. cont:

Regula Aluricii glosata Anglice

Liber sompniorum

De obseruacione Lune in rebus agendis

Oraciones Anglice

There is a further Bata connection in the following entry, headed "*Batte secundus*", which has a similar range of contents, though differently arranged, beginning with "*Expositiones de Prisciano exposite Anglice*". If ever there was an accurate title for Ælfric's *Grammar*, this is it.⁵⁴ Tantalisingly, the item which follows is "*Locutio latina glosata Anglice ad instruendos pueros*", which we can only take to be another copy of Ælfric's *Colloquy* such as it

Latin verse, and – also in the margins – an alphabetical Latin glossary, a Latin-English glossary, and a commentary on Donatus. Most of the manuscript is in Antwerp; the detached leaves in the British Library came there in 1884, but there is no record of how this occurred. For an analysis of the contents, see: FÖRSTER, "Glossenhandschrift Plantinus 32 (Antwerpen) und Additional 32246 (London)". See: IRVINE, *The Making of Textual Culture*, pp. 372-384, for discussion and illustration of the features of manuscripts associated with "*grammatica*" between c.700 and c.1100.

⁵² KER, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, p. 241. The manuscript as presently bound is disordered; it originally began, as the contents list indicates, with the Benedictine Rule and Reform Supplements (now fols. 117v-163v, inclusive of prefatory full-page drawing), followed by the *Regularis Concordia* (now fols. 2v-27v, also inclusive of prefatory full-page drawing).

⁵³ M.R. JAMES, *Ancient Libraries*, p. 50 (items 296 and also 297, referred to below). Eastry's catalogue is preserved in London, British Library, MS Cotton Galba E. iv. For discussion of this entry and item 247, see: GNEUSS, "Origin and Provenance of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts", pp. 19-24.

⁵⁴ GNEUSS, "Origin and provenance of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts", p. 21, suggests that "*Expositiones*", which is clearly an error for "*Excerptiones*", was caused by "*exposite*" three words later in the entry.

appears in Tiberius A iii, that is to say, with an Old English interlinear gloss. If so, this is an example of the *Colloquy* following the *Grammar*, as the pedagogical rationale dictates. Our delighted recognition is, however, qualified by the fact that we no longer have this manuscript, and that, if we did, it would provide us with a modified text, at least to the extent of having the Old English interlineation.

Of course we do not know what manuscripts have been lost, but if the surviving evidence is at all indicative, it suggests that Ælfric's *Colloquy* had relatively little use outside Ælfric's immediate circle and that his pupil Ælfric Bata was its chief exploiter, drawing it, by his successive modifications, more and more into the hermeneutic orbit, a realignment which raises interesting questions about the status and function of written colloquies in late Anglo-Saxon England. Given the tendency to use question and answer even within formal grammatical instruction⁵⁵ and the demand for an active rather than simply a passive understanding of Latin within the monastic life, it is difficult to believe that teachers did not make frequent use of practice dialogues. But these, in the more basic stages of language learning, were likely to have been of the moment and oral, for what would have been the purpose of expending time and resources on writing them down? A colloquy of this kind which was written out would, by that very act, acquire a different status and function, being transformed into an example to be learnt or a model of what could be achieved, a standard for others to emulate.⁵⁶ Perhaps this is how Ælfric's *Colloquy* should be understood, representing an essentially transient element in basic language teaching, which may have been widely used (though perhaps with less skill than this carefully thought out written version displays), but of which we inevitably have very little surviving evidence. By contrast, the collo-

⁵⁵ As in Ælfric's own *Grammar* and as in the grammatical dialogues which are found in some of the manuscripts: see above, p. 25. See: LAW, "The study of grammar", pp. 92-95, for comment on the use of the question and answer form in elementary language teaching (pp. 134-136 in *Grammar and Grammarians*). M. BAYLESS, "Beatus quid est and the study of grammar in late Anglo-Saxon England", *Historiographia Linguistica* 20 (1993), pp. 67-110, provides an extended example.

⁵⁶ The learning of a set dialogue has some pedagogic value in instilling patterns and building up confidence, but within a manuscript culture the gains are not likely to have been seen as great enough to justify the production of more copies, from which the master would in any case have to teach his pupils orally. Similarly, one can understand that there might be some reluctance to spend resources on copying a text which was purely exemplary. Ælfric had provided exemplary material before, in the form of the *Catholic Homilies*, intended to combat the bad example of other preaching material in circulation, but these homilies – like the *Grammar* and *Glossary* – could also actually be used directly and so were copied.

quies which generally achieved the status of *written* texts were those which were essentially part of a bookish tradition – media for displaying and developing the hermeneutic style, an altogether more specialised and *recherché* register than Ælfric was striving for in his grammatical works, or than he ever personally employed when writing Latin himself.⁵⁷ Ælfric recreated – and at the same time developed – the classical model of the colloquy, and its existence as an exemplar within a carefully prepared pedagogic set alongside the *Grammar* and *Glossary* makes good sense. But whereas the *Grammar* and *Glossary* were the ‘permanent’ tools of instruction and were much used in the form issued, the value of the *Colloquy* as a written text to be handed on was much less obvious, except to Ælfric’s pupil, who adopted it for another tradition, of which Ælfric was not a part. We can appreciate Ælfric’s intellectual position and pedagogical skill by examining the traditions and techniques of his grammatical texts, but the variations in response to them, as also to his other reforming works, point to Ælfric’s distinctive individuality as a scholar and define him, yet again, as someone who, though a committed exponent of the Reform, bears witness to its diversity.

Addendum

Since this article was completed, Gneuss’s “A preliminary list of manuscripts written or owned in England up to 1100” referred to in note 8, has been superseded by Helmut GNEUSS, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (Tempe, 2001: *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* 241).

We also now have the benefit of an edition of the *Excerptiones de Prisciano*, with facing modern English translation: *Excerptiones de Prisciano: The Source for Ælfric’s Latin-Old English Grammar*, ed. David W. PORTER (Woodbridge, 2002). The edition includes a detailed study of the textual traditions, which Porter recognises to be continental in origin, perhaps transmitted to England via the medium of the Benedictine monastery of Fleury. However, contrary to Vivien Law’s supposition that the *Excerptiones* is a continental work (see p. 13, note 19 above), Porter argues that “important clues suggest that England was the place of composition and that the likeliest candi-

⁵⁷ For an important assessment of Ælfric as a Latinist, see: C.A. JONES, “*Meatim Sed et Rustica: Ælfric of Eynsham as a medieval Latin author*”, *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 8 (1998), pp. 1-57.

date for author is in fact Ælfric himself, either alone or in cooperation with others" (p. 24). A major plank in his argument seems to be that the source-authors feeding into the *Excerptiones* are cited independently by Ælfric, which suggests to Porter that he still had them to hand. However, in view of the Carolingian tradition of marginal annotations which indicate the source-author for passages borrowed verbatim or nearly so, this is a deduction that cannot safely be made. In the case of the homilies, for example, for which Ælfric drew extensively on Carolingian compilations, he cites the original authority in the body of his own text when this is evident (as it usually is) from the rubrics in the source-anthology or the manuscript's marginal letter-abbreviations, through which the real authority is signalled.

“A Man Takes an Ox by the Horn and a Peasant by the Tongue” Literacy, Orality and Inquisition in Medieval Languedoc

JOHN H. ARNOLD

Item, he said that the day before yesterday, in the portico of the house of the inquisitor of Toulouse, before he, the witness, came in front of the inquisitor, Roger Pascal, Bernard Godi and Raymonde Arnalde of Sorèze, who had been cited together with the witness, told him that he should not do anything to harm them; and Roger Pascal said to him that a man takes an ox by the horn, and a peasant by the tongue (*quod bovem capit homo per cornu, et rusticum per ling[u]am*).¹

This was the report of one Bernard Barra, before the inquisitor Pierre Arsin, at Toulouse in 1277. He was an informer and spy for the inquisitors who were combating the Cathar heretics and their supporters in Languedoc. Roger Pascal's phrase, reported by Barra, neatly adumbrates what might be seen as two worlds in conflict: the literate, orthodox, textual world of the inquisitors; and the oral, heterodox, pastoral world of the Cathar believer. The warning is clear: the inquisitors are in the position of power. It is this relationship – literacy, orality, power – that I wish to investigate in this article.

The picture of literate inquisitors oppressing an oral laity may seem familiar to students of medieval heresy, if perhaps as a theme implicit rather than explicit within the existing literature. It has a long history, and a certain attrac-

¹ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Doat 25, fol. 296v. On medieval occitan proverbs, see: W. PFEFFER, *Proverbs in Medieval Occitan Literature* (Gainesville, 1997); although this particular example is not found amongst the troubadour sources she analyses.

tion, as an analysis of the operation of inquisition.² Inquisition was an intensely textual process. The witness, or deponent, would appear before the inquisitors – whether turning up spontaneously, or having been cited, or brought from prison – to make his or her confession. This confession was produced in response to a list of written questions that the inquisitors used for reference, and the deposition recorded by a scribe in Latin. The account was then rendered into a past-tense, third-person narrative of the interview, and read back to the deponent in the vernacular so that they could ‘authenticate’ it, and add any further items. The deponent was then sentenced, whether to wear the yellow crosses of infamy, be sent on pilgrimage, suffer loss of goods, prison, or the stake. The record of the confession was stored by the inquisitors for later use: citing other people mentioned, cross-checking accounts, re-citing the same deponent to check up on them.³ Records undoubtedly were powerful: for example, various people were found to have ‘relapsed’ into error after abjuration, the inquisitors having referred back to earlier cases against them in their archives.⁴ Many depositions simply require the witness to swear to having previously confessed (to an earlier tribunal) all that he or she knew about heresy, and abjure heresy, adding nothing further to the inquisitors’ substantive knowledge of heretical activity.⁵ This was not simply bureaucracy: the existence of such a record opened up the possibility of future transgression by the witness, if they were later found to have concealed something; or if they simply transgressed for the first time at a later date, they could then be found guilty of relapsing into error.

² See for example: H.C. LEA, *The Inquisition of the Middle Ages: its Organisation and Operation* (London, 1963), pp. 164 and 167. R.I. MOORE, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe 950-1250* (Oxford, 1987), presents inquisition as the culmination of conflict between the “*litterati*” and the “*illiterati*” (see, for example, pp. 138-139). On the history and operation of inquisition, see in particular: H.C. LEA, *A History of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages*, 3 volumes (New York, 1955; first published 1888). H. MAISONNEUVE, *Etudes sur les origines de l’inquisition* (Paris, 1960). J. GIVEN, *Inquisition and Medieval Society* (Ithaca, 1997). R. KIECKHEFER, “The office of inquisition and medieval heresy; the transition from personal to institutional jurisdiction”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46 (1995), pp. 36-61.

³ For one account of the inquisitors’ use of records, see: GIVEN, *Inquisition and Medieval Society*, pp. 25-51. Note however that Given, whilst analyzing the power inherent in the documents, tends to assume a foundation of ahistorical “rationality” and “progress” in the textual nature of inquisition.

⁴ LEA, *Inquisition*, pp. 131-132. Y. DOSSAT, *Les Crises de l’inquisition toulousaine au XIII^e siècle* (Bordeaux, 1959), p. 32. GIVEN, *Inquisition and Medieval Society*, pp. 39-42.

⁵ For example: Doat 26, fol. 7r-v.

In addition to all of this, the records exercised a more 'productive' power: they prompted and shaped the deponents' speech, within the context of inquisitorial discourse.⁶ It sorted, ordered and categorised the oral record of social practice into the binary logic of heresy and orthodoxy; and it carried out this process through the translation of speech into writing. To be entered into the inquisitorial registers, and caught up in the variety of documents (confessions, abjurations, letters of penance) was to be placed and located within a set of categorized, transgressive identities.⁷ Inquisition was therefore a process that took the words – the oral statements and beliefs – of the laity and inscribed them within a textual discourse.

The authority of the inquisitors was bound up in texts: not only the records they kept and used, but the statutes and inquisitorial manuals that were increasingly produced through the later thirteenth and early fourteenth-century to map out their task and define inquisitorial procedure.⁸ It is important to note that inquisition was not simply a literate and textual operation, but *asserted itself* as such. Bernard Gui's early fourteenth century inquisitorial manual, the *Practica inquisitionis*, contains for example a lengthy chapter on the authority and powers of the inquisitors, accompanied by passages on the nature of the men needed for such a task.⁹ Gui's description of the ideal inquisitor calls for a man who is diligent, zealous, constant of purpose, and above all else able to discern

⁶ On the 'productive' elements of power, see for example: M. FOUCAULT, "Truth and power", in: IDEM, *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. and trans. C. GORDON *e.a.* (New York, 1980), pp. 109-133.

⁷ See, for example, the categories set down in the Council of Tarragona, 1242, in: J.D. MANSI, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, 31 volumes (Florence and Venice, 1759-1798), 23, cols. 553-558. For further comments on the inquisitorial process in different contexts, see: G.G. MERLO, "Coercition et orthodoxie: modalités de communication et d'imposition d'un message religieux hégémonique", in: *Faire croire. Modalités de la diffusion et de la réception des messages religieux du XIIe au XIV siècle*, ed. A. VAUCHEZ *e.a.* (Rome, 1981), pp. 101-118. S. BECKWITH, "Sacrum signum: sacramentality and dissent in York's theatre of Corpus Christi", in: *Criticism and Dissent in the Middle Ages*, ed. R. COPELAND (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 264-288, p. 265. On the use of depositions as a product of inquisitorial discourse, see: C. GINZBURG, "The inquisitor as anthropologist" in: IDEM, *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method*, trans. J. and A. TEDESCHI (Baltimore, 1989), pp. 156-164. J.H. ARNOLD, "Historian as inquisitor", *Rethinking History* 2: 3 (1998), pp. 379-386. My thoughts here on the relationship between deponents' speech and inquisitorial discourse are drawn from: J.H. ARNOLD, *Inquisition and Power: Catharism and the Confessing Subject in Medieval Languedoc* (Philadelphia, 2001).

⁸ On the manuals in general, see: A. DONDAINE, "Le manuel de l'inquisiteur", in: *Les hérésies et l'inquisition XIII-XIV siècles*, ed. Y. DOSSAT (Aldershot, 1990; article first published 1947), pp. 85-194. On the statutes: MAISONNEUVE, *Etudes*, chapter 6.

⁹ Bernard Gui, *Practica inquisitionis heretice pravitatis*, ed. C. DOUAIS (Paris, 1886), pp. 173-233.

the nature of a truth that may be hidden beneath deceit and uncertainty.¹⁰ This ability to discern the truth – to be one who is “*discretus*”, and thus to be able to penetrate beneath the untrustworthy surface of things – is linked at various points with both literacy (“*litteratus*”) and the inquisitorial role.¹¹ Elsewhere Gui indicates that when sentencing people, a summary of their crimes and the penance imposed was to be read out in a public sermon firstly in Latin, and secondly repeated in the vernacular so that the penitents could understand it, thus emphasizing the control of the literate inquisitors.¹²

Gui’s manual – and indeed the other statutes and manuals relating to inquisition – operate in part as textual constructions of inquisitorial identity and authority. A key element in this identity – perhaps the key element – was literacy, and all it implied. Being literate (“*litteratus*”) in the middle ages meant, of course, more than the ability to read and write. It indicated not only a command of Latin, but the knowledge, authority and ‘discretion’ that accompanied such a skill, the ability above all else to provide an authoritative interpretation of language and meaning. The antonyms for “*Litteratus*” were “*rusticus*”, “*idiotia*”, “*laicus*” – the lay person.¹³ Within inquisitorial discourse, the lay deponents were positioned as the opposing term in this binary, but were to be tied into the textual web of inquisitorial activity, through their depositions, penances, and accompanying records. And the laity were aware of the power of literacy and texts. On various occasions attempts were made to steal or destroy inquisitorial archives.¹⁴ At other points, we find deponents who understood, and attempted to disrupt, the textual basis of the inquisitorial process by giving false names, denying that recorded texts related to them, or claiming that past

¹⁰ Gui, *Practica*, pp. 232-233.

¹¹ For example: Gui, *Practica*, pp. 175, 188, 218 and 239.

¹² Gui, *Practica*, p. 91.

¹³ H. GRUNDMANN, “*Litteratus – illitteratus. Der Wandel einer Bildungsnorm vom Altertum zum Mittelalter*”, *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 40 (1958) pp. 1-65. M.T. CLANCHY, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (second edition; Oxford, 1993). B. STOCK, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, 1983). M. IRVINE, *The Making of Textual Culture: ‘Grammatica’ and Literary Theory 350-1100* (Cambridge, 1994). On representations of the “*rustici*” in relation to literacy, see also: S. JUSTICE, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley, 1994), chapter 1. P. FREEDMAN, *Images of the Medieval Peasant* (Stanford, 1999), chapter 6.

¹⁴ GIVEN, *Inquisition and Medieval Society*, pp. 118-119. G.W. DAVIS, *The Inquisition at Albi 1299-1300* (New York, 1948), pp. 51-54. M. LEBOS, “Le complot des Carcassonnais contre l’inquisition (1283-1285)”, in: *Carcassonne et sa région, Actes des 41e et 42e Congrès d’Etudes Régionales tenu par la Fédération Historique du Languedoc Méditerranéen et du Roussillon et par la Fédération des Sociétés Académiques et Savantes du Languedoc-Pyrénées-Gascogne, Carcassonne 17-19 Mai 1968* (Montpellier, 1970), pp. 159-163.

confessions they had made had not been recorded – and were therefore outside the reach of the inquisitorial method.¹⁵ Inquisition was therefore a textual mechanism, informed by a ‘literate’ ideology, whose power over the laity operated in large part through the control and circulation of written documents.¹⁶ In this, of course, it did not stand alone. The theme of literate technologies being used to attempt to control subaltern groups has a resonance for other areas of medieval history, and indeed for other chronological periods and geographical locations.¹⁷

It may seem that, in this brief analysis of inquisitorial technique, I am invoking and authorizing a fairly classic anthropological distinction between ‘orality’ and ‘literacy’; and, perhaps, an accompanying medievalist description of ‘two cultures’, lay and clerical.¹⁸ However, it is not in fact the purpose of this article to underwrite these dualities, to attest to their universality and hermeneutic strength, but instead to place them under a little pressure, to see whether they necessarily operate as neatly as their binarism would suggest. The anthropological distinction between ‘oral’ and ‘literate’ societies arose – or, at least, was theorized and made prevalent – in the structural anthropology of the 1970s, and has had in its turn an influential role on medievalists’ work in this area.¹⁹ If we go back to Jack Goody, Walter Ong and others, we see that the difference between ‘oral’ and ‘literate’ does not arguably end at the simple

¹⁵ See: GIVEN, *Inquisition and Medieval Society*, pp. 91-165 and *passim*.

¹⁶ This is not to deny that other, more physical and political elements of ‘power’ were also part of inquisition; but to emphasize its *discursive* nature. See ARNOLD, *Inquisition and Power*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁷ For example: JUSTICE, *Writing and Rebellion*. K. THOMAS, “The meaning of literacy in early modern England”, in: *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition*, ed. G. BAUMANN (Oxford, 1986), pp. 97-131. D. ROLLISON, *The Local Origins of Modern Society: Gloucestershire, 1500-1800* (London, 1992), pp. 12-15 and pp. 67-83. M. JOHNSON, *An Archaeology of Capitalism* (Oxford, 1996), chapter 5. A. PAGDEN, *The Fall of Natural Man; The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge, 1982). For a more nuanced view and commentary, to which I am indebted, see: A. WOOD, “Custom and the social organisation of writing in early modern England”, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 9 (1999), pp. 257-269. My thanks to the author for pre-publication access to this article.

¹⁸ J. LE GOFF, *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. A. GOLDHAMMER (Chicago, 1980). See also: A. GUREVICH, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, trans. J.M. BAK and P.A. HOLLINGSWORTH (Cambridge, 1988). The dichotomy could be traced back at least to the Bollandist scholar Hippolyte Delehaye, in his division of ‘the people’ from ‘the Hagiographer’, and accompanying comments. See: H. DELEHAYE, *The Legends of the Saints* (New York, 1962. First published 1905), pp. 14-15, 20, 28-29, and *passim*. My thanks to Patrick J. Nugent for suggesting this reference.

¹⁹ See pre-eminently: J. GOODY, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge, 1977). W. ONG, *Orality and Literacy* (London, 1982).

possession or non-possession of written language. 'Orality' and 'literacy' are, rather, understood to have structural cognitive consequences, both for individual modes of thought and for the cultural organisation of the social groups characterized by them. To put the structural argument briefly but crudely, oral societies possess the means of forgetting (traditions, laws, boundaries, knowledge), whereas literate societies are haunted by the ghosts of past experience, as they cannot 'discard, absorb, or transmute the past in the same way'.²⁰ The presence of the past leads to historical comparison, which in turn leads to sceptical inquiry, which in turn leads to logic, knowledge and perhaps 'civilisation'.²¹

A recent article by D.H. Green sums up the implications for medievalists of this seductive hermeneutic of difference: literacy brings a certain 'emancipation' from orality; "writing can liberate its practitioners from the constraints of time and place to which oral communication is subject"; the store-house of writing provides "incremental knowledge" which fosters the emergence of a "critical attitude".²² Although Green and others are keen to stress the interpenetration of orality and literacy,²³ this kind of analysis does nonetheless tend towards the assertion of an essential epistemological difference between the two, and operates within an implicit teleological narrative of 'modernity'. Literacy (it is implied) leads to modern, rational thought. For example, Suzanne Fleischmann, although emphasizing the lack of a clear divide between orality and literacy, has nonetheless recently set out to identify "oral residue" in Old French texts, a residue that is characterized by its "incoherence".²⁴

However, recent work within both anthropology and critical theory has questioned this idea of the essence of difference upon which the oral/literate binary depends.²⁵ Landeg White and Leroy Vail have pointed out some of the

²⁰ J. GOODY and I. WATT, "The consequences of literacy", in: *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed. J. GOODY (Cambridge, 1968; article first published 1963), pp. 27-68, p. 67.

²¹ GOODY and WATT, "Consequences", p. 68: "The kinds of analysis involved in the syllogism, and in the other forms of logical procedure, are clearly dependent upon writing". Goody's position became more nuanced in later writings; nonetheless, to the extent that the anthropological approaches have influenced historians, there has been a tendency to retain the assumption of an implicit hierarchy of power within the oral/literate binary.

²² D.H. GREEN, "Orality and reading; the state of research in medieval studies", *Speculum* 65 (1990), pp. 267-280, p. 273.

²³ See, in particular: STOCK, *Implications of Literacy*, pp. 88-240.

²⁴ S. FLEISCHMANN, "Philology, linguistics and the discourse of the medieval text", *Speculum* 65 (1990) pp. 19-37, p. 20.

²⁵ See the pointed critique in: J. HALVERSON, "Goody and the implosion of the literacy thesis", *Man* n.s. 27 (1992), pp. 301-317. My thanks to Simon Ditchfield for this reference.

prejudices and problems implicit in the exposition of this difference, and have suggested from their own empirical research that practically every kind of linguistic and cognitive element supposedly particular to literacy can in fact be found in 'oral' societies.²⁶ Isobel Hofmeyr, in a wonderful book entitled *We Spend Our Lives as a Tale That is Told*, has analysed African 'orality' and its interface with white colonial bureaucracy in the nineteenth century.²⁷ Her research supports White and Vail's critique of Goody and Ong, and shows how a supposedly 'deficient' oral culture provided people with a number of tactics for opposing and undermining the written, formulaic discourse of the white ruling class. Furthermore, she suggests that 'orality' (and indeed 'literacy') cannot be understood as one thing, but should be seen as a variety of cultural positions and technologies, with accompanying resources and oppositional tactics. In the field of linguistic and philosophical theory, Jacques Derrida has, of course, mischievously deconstructed all notions of difference between writing and speech, pointing to the precarious self-authorization that the written draws to itself by positing this essentialist binary.²⁸ Finally, to return to the field of medieval studies, Derrida's deconstructive move has in turn prompted Jesse Gellrich to critique the supposed oral/literate divide in the middle ages.²⁹

If we take some of these criticisms on board, where does that lead us with regard to heresy and inquisition? If we move away from the monolithic description of inquisitorial power and lay persecution discussed in the first part of this article, and focus in detail on the contact between inquisitors and lay people, we do indeed find a more complex situation than can be characterized by the ascription of a clear oral/literate divide or 'two cultures' model. Whilst inquisitorial discourse asserted its literate authority over questions of the faith, there was a long history of an opposing *topos* that feared heretics' dangerous and devilish facility with language and learning.³⁰ In the mid-eleventh century,

²⁶ L. VAIL and L. WHITE, *Power and the Praise Poem: Southern African Voices in History* (Charlottesville, 1991). My thanks to Lan White for discussion and references around this topic.

²⁷ I. HOFMEYR, "We Spend Our Lives as a Tale That is Told": *Oral Historical Narratives in a South African Chieftdom* (London, 1994).

²⁸ J. DERRIDA, "Freud and the scene of writing", in: IDEM, *Writing and Difference*, trans. A. BASS (London, 1978), pp. 196-231. IDEM, "Signature, event, context", in: IDEM, *The Margins of Philosophy*, trans. A. BASS (London, 1982), pp. 309-330.

²⁹ J.M. GELLRICH, "Orality, literacy and crisis in the later middle ages", *Philological Quarterly* 67 (1988) pp. 461-473.

³⁰ P. BILLER, "Heresy and literacy: earlier history of the theme", in: *Heresy and Literacy 1000-1530*, ed. P. BILLER and A. HUDSON (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 1-18, p. 4. IDEM, "The topos and reality of the heretic as *illiteratus*", in: IDEM, *The Waldensians, 1170 - 1530* (Aldershot, 2001), pp. 169-190. My thanks to the author for pre-publication access to the latter.

heretics at Châlons-sur-Marne were recruiting amongst the “*rustici*”. It was claimed by orthodox commentators that

if it happened that any ignorant, tongue-tied persons were enrolled among the partisans of this error, it was stoutly asserted that at once they became more eloquent than even the most learned Catholics, so that it almost seemed as if the really true eloquence of the wise could be overcome by their garrulity.³¹

When the Cathars first appeared in southern France, one of the terrors they held for the church was their apparent knowledge of literate culture, and their ability to dispute successfully with orthodox intellectuals, as if “*litterati*”.³² Part of the church’s response to heresy in the early years of the thirteenth century was to attempt to raise the standards of learning amongst the clergy and circumscribe lay vernacular literacy,³³ and to encourage the learned Dominican order against heresy, precisely because of the threat that heretical learning posed.³⁴

These texts illustrate orthodox *fears* over heretical literacy. If we look at the Languedocian Cathars themselves, we find that they were, as Pete Biller has recently described them, a ‘written Church’.³⁵ Texts were integral to their beliefs and practices: the Gospel of St John was an intrinsic part of the

³¹ *Herigeri et Anselmi gesta episcoporum Tungrensium Traiectensium et Leodiensium*, ed. R. KOEPKE (Hannover, 1846: *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores VII*), pp. 134-234, p. 226: “*Si quos vero idiotas et infacundos huius erroris sectatoribus adiungi contingeret, statim eruditissimis etiam catholicis facundiores fieri asseverabat, ita ut sincera sane sapientium eloquentia pene eorum loquacitate superari posse videretur*”. Translation in: *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, ed. and trans. W.L. WAKEFIELD and A.P. EVANS (second edition; New York, 1991) p. 90.

³² See, for example, the account of Cathars debating with Catholic bishops in 1165, in: MANSI, *Sacrorum Conciliorum*, 22, cols. 157-168; translated in part in: *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, pp. 189-194.

³³ See for example canon 14 of the council of Toulouse, 1229, which forbade the laity to own books of scripture, particularly those in vernacular translation: MANSI, *Sacrorum conciliorum*, 23, col. 197. Similarly canon 2 of the council of Tarragona, 1234: MANSI, *Sacrorum conciliorum*, 23, col. 330.

³⁴ See for example: Jordan of Saxony, *On the Beginning of the Order of Preachers*, ed. and trans. S. TUGWELL (Chicago, 1982), and William Pelhisson’s early thirteenth-century chronicle, in: Guillaume Pelhisson, *Chronique*, ed. and trans. J. DUVERNOY (Paris, 1994); English translation in: W.L. WAKEFIELD, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition in Southern France 1100-1250* (London, 1974), pp. 207-236.

³⁵ P. BILLER, “The Cathars of Languedoc and written materials”, in: *Heresy and Literacy*, pp. 61-82. IDEM, “Women and texts in Languedocian Catharism”, in: *Women, the Book and the Godly*, ed. L. SMITH and J.H.M. TAYLOR (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 171-182.

"*consolamentum*", the central ritual of purification, while texts from the New Testament would appear to have informed their preaching.³⁶ At various points deponents report Cathars using texts, storing texts, lending texts and so on.³⁷ Furthermore, it would be inaccurate to describe the Languedocian laity in general as lacking access to literacy. Scribes and clerks were relatively common in that society,³⁸ and we find, for example, mention of lay people communicating by letter on various occasions in the inquisitorial depositions.³⁹

We can see, perhaps unsurprisingly, that treating 'inquisitors' and 'lay deponents' as two homogeneous blocks representing respectively 'literacy' and 'orality' does not fully address the range of experiences and cultural practices in medieval Languedoc. At the very least, we would need to recognise a continuum rather than a dichotomy between orality and literacy. However, for the reasons discussed above, the trace of the oral/literate divide is nonetheless presented by the evidence; the laity are *positioned* as 'oral' (or at least, "*illiterati*") by inquisitorial discourse. If we take on board some of the recent attempts to problematise the binary, we may have an opportunity both to reinterpret the relationship between inquisitors and deponents (and indeed, perhaps, between the 'two cultures' of clergy and laity), and also to rethink our conceptions of literacy and orality. We need, I would suggest, to reconceptualise what 'orality' and 'literacy' may mean in any given situation, to consider the different ways in which they *function*, and the circumstances in which they are deployed and contested within the inquisitorial context.

Let us return to Pascal's proverb: "a man takes [*capere*] an ox by the horn, and a peasant [*rusticus*] by the tongue." This was undoubtedly meant as a

³⁶ J. ARNOLD, "The preaching of the Cathars", in: *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. C. MUESSIG (Leiden, 1998), pp. 183-205.

³⁷ BILLER, "Cathars and written materials", *passim*.

³⁸ PFEFFER, *Medieval Occitan Proverbs*, pp. 12-33. L.M. PATERSON, *The World of the Troubadours; Medieval Occitan Society c. 1100 – c. 1300* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 134. M.-C. MARANDET, "Approche d'un milieu social: le notariat en Midi toulousain aux XI^e et XV^e siècles", in: *Visages du notariat dans l'histoire du Midi toulousain XIV^e-XIX^e siècles*, ed. J.L. LAFFONT (Toulouse, 1992), pp. 81-115.

³⁹ For example, in 1243 one Stephen Massa deposed that he had been sent with letters to the town of Vaur, to warn Cathars there that they were liable to be captured (Doat 23, fol. 295r). Depositional evidence shows letters being used for communication between those members of the nobility who were involved in violent opposition to the inquisitors, but also in other less fraught occasions, and amongst lower social classes. For other occasions mentioning letters in the depositions, see: Doat 22, fols. 7r, 27r, 76v, 77r, 256v, 284v, 294v; Doat 24 fols. 67r-68r, 160v, 167v, 171r, 171v-172r, 178r, 181r, 229v-230r. Doat 25, fol. 312v. See also references to texts in general in: BILLER, "Cathars and written material".

warning to Bernard Barra: watch what you say with the inquisitors, because they can tie you up in knots. However, perhaps we can delve a little deeper into the proverb, and the tensions it contains. “*Capere*” might be translated as “to bind” rather than “to take”. Versions of this proverb appear later in French history, and these occurrences do suggest that translation. For example, in the sixteenth century we find it as “*Commes les boeufs par les cornes on lye, Aussi les gents par leurs mots ou folie*”; “*lier*” meaning “to bind”.⁴⁰ If the inquisitors “bind” the peasant, this could again simply mean “tie up in knots”. But “*lier*” also has the suggestion of binding *to* something. Compare Pascal’s warning to a statement on the powers and dangers of inquisition, made about the early (and over-zealous) inquisitor Robert le Bougre. Robert, it was said, had a magic piece of writing which, when held over the head of an unfortunate person, compelled them to say whatever he wished them to, that is, to confess to heresy.⁴¹ I think that what is being described here is the process of interpellation: the hailing into discourse of the unwilling subject.⁴² Robert le Bougre’s power came not simply from making people speak, but from making them speak about heresy, within an inquisitorial context; that is, to produce speech of a particular kind, within a particular situation of authority and power. Similarly, Pascal’s warning is about being tied *into* inquisitorial discourse; it is the *context* of speech that matters.

We can go further: the proverb obviously indicates a power relationship. The discourse into which the peasant or “*rusticus*” may be bound is the discourse of the “man” (“*homo*”), that is, the inquisitor. And we might therefore see this once again as a statement about a divide between orality and literacy, two different cultures or discursive fields, the latter holding sway over the former. But the proverb hints at something more complex. It does not simply state “the inquisitor will tie you into his language, as a man (presumably a rural man, a “*rusticus*”, like Pascal and Barra) does an ox”. It says that a *man* – “*homo*” – leads an ox by the horn and a “*rusticus*” by the tongue. The position of “*homo*” is not restricted to that of inquisitor, nor, necessarily, are Pascal and Barra restricted to the position of “*rusticus*”. If they were – if the proverb

⁴⁰ M. LE ROUX DE LINCY, *Le Livre des Proverbes Français, précède de recherches historiques sur les proverbes Français et leur emploi dans la littérature du moyen âge et de la Renaissance*, 2 volumes (second edition; Paris, 1859), I, p.150. See also: BILLER, “Heresy and literacy”, p. 9, n. 27, which provides other occurrences of versions of the proverb.

⁴¹ R. KIECKHEFER, *Repression of Heresy in Medieval Germany* (Liverpool, 1979), p. 15.

⁴² On the concept of interpellation, see: L. ALTHUSSER, “Ideology and ideological state apparatuses”, in: IDEM, *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays*, trans. B. BREWSTER (London, 1971), pp. 121-173.

meant “a ‘*rusticus*’ like you will be tied up by a ‘*homo*’ like the inquisitor” – then it would not serve as a warning but as a prophecy. It acts as a caveat only if the positions of “*rusticus*” and “*homo*” are, for the moment, open and unfilled.

What, I would suggest, the proverb therefore indicates is that the position of “*rusticus*” is a performative one. That is, it is not a stable or *a priori* category, but a culturally recognisable identity which can be ‘cited’ and ‘recited’ within contingent circumstances.⁴³ It is a position – a subjectivity – into which you might step, fall, or be tied, if you are not careful. Bernard Barra is being warned *not* to be a “*rusticus*”, but to attempt to find some other subject position within inquisitorial discourse. And I think that this notion of performative subjectivity, negotiated within the cultural codes of inquisition, literacy, and orality, is exactly what we find in the inquisitorial registers. In the last section of this article I will attempt to illustrate this through a close reading of one such deposition.

The deponent Pierre Sabatier, a weaver of Varilhes (a village just north of Foix, in the south of France) was first called before the inquisitor archbishop Jacques Fournier on 23 October 1318, at the Archbishop’s house in Pamiers.⁴⁴ He was cited for being publicly defamed (“*diffamatus*”) of having uttered heretical words, namely that (1) all that was ever said or sung in church were lies, and (2) that when attending to those on the point of death, one might as well put the holy candle in their arse as in their mouth.⁴⁵ Over the course of six interviews Pierre attempted to defend himself, and in so doing provides us, I think, with a further insight into how we might understand the positions of ‘oral’ and ‘literate’.

At this first interview in October, Pierre denied the first statement about what was said in church, and on the second one claimed that he had never said it, but that his late brother-in-law Bernard Masse had alleged it against him out of ill-will. Bernard had – Pierre claimed – begged Pierre’s pardon for this on

⁴³ On the concept of performativity, see: J. BUTLER, *Bodies That Matter: on the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’* (London, 1993), pp. 1–23. IDEM, *Excitable Speech: a Politics of the Performative* (London, 1997).

⁴⁴ Pierre’s deposition appears in: *Le registre d’inquisition de Jacques Fournier, évêque de Pamiers (1318–1325)*, ed. J. DUVERNOY, 3 volumes (Toulouse, 1965), I, pp. 144–150 (henceforth *Registre*). It is translated into French in: *Le registre d’inquisition de Jacques Fournier (évêque de Pamiers) 1318–1325*, ed. and trans. J. DUVERNOY, 3 volumes (Paris, 1978), I, pp. 49–54 (henceforth *Fournier*).

⁴⁵ “...quod omnia que dicuntur et cantantur in ecclesia sint mendacia”. “...quod tantum prodesset personis laborantibus in extremis si candela benedicta poneretur eis in ano quam admodum et in ore”. *Registre*, p. 144. *Fournier*, p. 49.

his death-bed. Asked about the articles of orthodox faith Pierre stoutly asserted that

he was a good and faithful Catholic, and that he paid the first and tenths, gave alms to the poor of Christ, and made pilgrimages and did other things just as a good and catholic christian does and ought to do.⁴⁶

At his second interview (Fournier evidently not having accepted these statements) Pierre reconsidered his testimony. He said that one day, whilst heading to church, he had met one H  lis Mate, who had asked him where he was going. He had said he was going to church where they told lies, *but*, he told Fournier, he was drunk when he said this, and what he meant was that at that moment there was singing in the church.⁴⁷ Questioned again about the candle, he admitted that he had told Bernard Masse some twenty years ago that if someone died in a state of mortal sin, you might as well put the holy candle in their arse, and that Bernard had defamed him badly on this subject afterwards. Questioned again on the articles of faith, he again asserted that he was "a good and faithful catholic christian", and said that he had gone on pilgrimage to Notre-Dame-de-Montserrat last year with his wife, and this year to Compostella.

In a third interview, Pierre began to change his story a bit more. He confessed that he had once said, outside the door of his house, in the hearing of H  lis Mate and another fellow (now dead), that when he went to church, it seemed to him, all that was sung and said by the priests and clerics was lies and foolishness. However, he was never in doubt, but on the contrary always believed in the truth of the sacraments of the Church and the articles of faith. Fournier pressed him on this point: did he believe these words when he had said them? Pierre admitted that he had believed them beforehand, for about a year. He believed "in his stupidity" ("*credebat ex fatuitate sua*") that when the priests sang to fulfil the divine office, they did so only to receive the offertory gifts, and not for any other good effect in the divine office.⁴⁸ Asked how long

⁴⁶ "*Interrogatus super articulis fidei, dixit se esse bonum christianum catholicum et fidelem, et quod solvebat decimas et primicias et dabat elemosinas pauperibus Christi, et faciebat peregrinationes et alias prout bonus et catholicus christianus facit et facere debet*". *Registre*, pp. 144-145. Fournier, p. 49.

⁴⁷ "*Dixit tamen quod quando predicta dixit, erat ebrius, et quod predicat dixit ea intencione quia in dicta ecclesia erant tunc choree, ut dixit*". *Registre*, p. 145. Fournier, p. 50. The final "*ut dixit*" ("as he said") sometimes indicates inquisitorial doubt over the truth of a witness's statement.

⁴⁸ *Registre*, p. 146. Fournier, pp. 50-51.

he had persisted in this error, he then asserted that at the point at which he said these words he no longer believed them, and was later contrite and confessed it twice: once to a priest at Notre-Dame-de-Montserrat, and secondly to a confessor (“*penitenciaris*”) at Monxoy (the last staging post before Compostella).⁴⁹ Questioned on the second ‘heretical article’ (as the inquisitor was now terming Pierre’s statements), he explained that Bernard Masse had once asked him why one held a holy candle in the mouth of men and women who were dying. Pierre had replied that if the light was clear, it was to signify that the soul had confessed and was absolved of sin and that therefore they would clearly go to God.⁵⁰ But if they were not repentant, then one might as well put the candle in their arse as in their mouth.

After a very short interview on 30 November, Pierre appeared again on the 29 April 1319, when Fournier made him run through his explanations once more.⁵¹ Pierre was asked what he had meant in his earlier confession by the words

that all which is sung in church by priests and clerics was lies and foolishness, although he was never in doubt but rather always believed [in the orthodox faith].

Pierre explained that he felt that all that the priests did in the course of the Mass (with the exception of the *Credo* and consecration) was lies and foolishness, and that the priests had invented them to get the offertory, and that the mass had no good effect other than procuring for the priests the offerings of the people. However, he always believed in the articles of faith and the sacraments of the church. And having said all this, Pierre asked that the inquisitor now move to sentence him immediately.⁵²

What do we make of this? First of all, tactics. Pierre, like several other deponents, tries to find ways of dealing with the inquisitorial questions. He mentions people who have now died (and therefore cannot be interviewed). He excuses his words on the grounds of being drunk, and on the grounds of “foolishness”. He presents himself as one kind of “*rusticus*” – the sort of man who

⁴⁹ *Registre*, p. 146, n. 64.

⁵⁰ “*clare ibant ad Deum*” – the play on the different valencies of “clear” is present in the Latin, and presumably also in the original Occitan. *Registre*, p. 147.

⁵¹ *Registre*, pp. 147–148. Pierre was ‘led’ to the interview in November, which may indicate imprisonment at that point – and hence also further imprisonment between the November and April interrogations.

⁵² *Registre*, pp. 148–149. Fournier, p. 52. After this, the formulae for sentence and abjuration were read out on the same day, and on “the last Wednesday in April” of 1319 (presumably within the next day or two) Pierre was cited to hear sentence. *Registre*, pp. 149–150.

does not know the import of his words, who speaks in jest and folly, the antonym of "*discretus*".⁵³ In opposition to this mode of speech is the categorizing discourse of inquisition, which presents his two alleged statements as heretical 'articles', and questions him with the same formula used for Cathar heretics. For example, Pierre was asked if he had ever been taught these words, or indeed if he had ever taught them to anyone else. He was questioned on whether his parents or family had ever had contact with heresy or been suspected of contact. And when abjuring his words, he was asked to swear to combat heresy and Waldensianism, though neither of these sects would seem to have much to do with his beliefs.⁵⁴ In one way, then, we have oral statements meeting a literate mechanism: Pierre's social comments on the clergy re-read as theological doubt, his explanation of the sacred candle in the last rites re-interpreted as heresy.

Pierre's statements about his orthodox belief are interesting too. Whereas the inquisitors were questioning Pierre about his commitment to abstract beliefs, Pierre on the whole talks about *practices*. His first assertion of his orthodoxy stressed the fact that he paid tithes and gave alms, went on pilgrimage and did "other things that a good and catholic Christian does and should do". One might then see Pierre's faith as essentially practical, social and performative. In contrast, the inquisitors ask him to assent to each article of orthodox faith. He is asked to swear that he believes in all of the Holy Scripture contained in the Old and New Testaments.⁵⁵ I think we can be confident that a weaver did not actually know all that the Testaments contained. Pierre is being asked to assent to the literate authority of the inquisitor and the church, over his own (possibly 'oral') beliefs and practices. Literacy thus triumphs over orality.

But does it? Arguably the very process of confession – of speaking within the literate discourse of another – would be part of that literate victory. Note that Pierre had confessed *before* this inquisitorial interview. He says that he had confessed twice on his suspicion over the motives of priests and the offer-

⁵³ We might note a similar tactic, the mirror of Pierre's position, being deployed by another deponent who came before the inquisitors in 1273. Fabrissa Vital, accused of contact with heretics, claimed that when she had heard another man called Pierre Maurel saying that the church was wrong to persecute the "Friends of God" (a term for the Cathar elite), she had replied "but the clergy study everyday in books, and it was extraordinary that they were persecuting them if they knew that it was a sin to persecute them" (Doat 25, fols. 46v-47r). Given Fabrissa's later confession that she was an adherent of the Cathar faith (fol. 51v), this was almost certainly a disingenuous statement, but one that presents the 'proper' attitude of an "*illiteratus*" to clerical culture.

⁵⁴ *Registre*, pp. 146-147. *Fournier*, p. 51.

⁵⁵ *Registre*, p. 147. *Fournier*, p. 51.

tory, once at Montserrat and once outside Compostella. So although tied – interpellated – into the confessional discourse, Pierre did exercise a degree of agency in his management of confession. And this had real implications. If Pierre had already received penance for these beliefs, he could not, strictly speaking, be punished by Fournier.⁵⁶ In fact, Fournier awarded him the fairly light penance of wearing the yellow crosses of infamy, and this was anyway rescinded on 8 March 1321.⁵⁷ This was not simply because the inquisitor did not think Pierre constituted a threat to the church. There are others in the Fournier register who express individual beliefs, not connected to Catharism, who nonetheless received harsh penances.⁵⁸ Pierre's success in avoiding a harsh penance was, I think, an indication that his tactics were, in part, successful. He presents a coded legal challenge – that he has previously confessed – and he presents himself as an unthreatening “*rusticus*” who spoke through drink and stupidity.

But it is important to note that Pierre was not stupid, if by that we mean incapable of conceptual thought, lacking in knowledge, the opposite of all those ‘literate’ qualities assumed by the inquisitor, and, on occasions, by the modern historian or ethnographer. Pierre's claim that all that the priests sung and said was lies displays a deep suspicion of clerical literacy, the suspicion, at heart, that this Latinate pomp was a con. In his opposition to clerical language and learning, we might see Pierre as part of a wider medieval ‘anticlericalism’ that focused on the use and control of language. We could note for example that suspicion of “clergie” and “glosing” is a key element of the “new anticlericalism” described recently by Wendy Scase in later medieval England.⁵⁹ One could also point to the extremely hostile depictions of the friars in the poetry of the thirteenth-century troubadour Peire Cardenal, and in particular a passage where, in a fashion faintly resonant of Pierre's words, he mocks their devotional singing:

⁵⁶ See the council of Tarragona, 1242, in: MANSI, *Sacrorum conciliorum*, 23, col. 555, which establishes that if a deponent had previously confessed his or her heretical deeds to a priest or confessor, and completed penance for it, although the priest should have referred the case to either the bishop or inquisitors, the deponent could nonetheless thus “evade temporal punishment”.

⁵⁷ Fournier, p. 54, n. 8.

⁵⁸ See: ARNOLD, *Inquisition and Power*, chapter 5.

⁵⁹ W. SCASE, *Piers Plowman and the New Anticlericalism* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 41, 45 and 82–83. See also: P. SZITTYA, *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature* (Princeton, 1986), p. 53, on beliefs that the eloquence of the friars could be “a perversion of the word”.

And in place of matins, they [the clergy] have devised a service where they lie abed with whores till the sun is up, and before that they sing ballads and sprightly versets. Caiaphas and Pilate will sooner win God!⁶⁰

One *might* then posit a 'culture' of anticlerical speech, within which Pierre Sabatier's statements can be located. However, as this article has argued, it is ultimately unhelpful to invoke such monoliths. We should not conclude this analysis by assuming that the final meaning of Pierre's words is to locate him in his 'proper place', as a member of 'oral (or lay) culture', explained and thus silenced.

To move away from the concept of 'culture' or "*mentalité*" (whilst still admitting that the ghost of its presence haunts our interpretation) we should note that although Pierre appears hostile to the claims of the "*litterati*", he is not alienated from their language. When talking about which parts of the Mass he thought were made up he carefully lists the *Introitus*, *Kyrie eleison*, *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, readings, *alleluia*, Gospel, offertory, preface, *Sanctus*, *Agnus Dei*, the postcommunion and more.⁶¹ He conducts a theological conversation with Bernard Masse about the state of the soul at death and the need for contrition. He is not an ignorant peasant, shaking his head suspiciously at clerical literacy. He is asserting his own interpretation of religious practice and language.

What I am suggesting then is firstly that Pierre's orality is not "stupidity". It is not a lack, but a different set of assumptions and practices, rooted in (but not over-determined by) sociocultural practice. And secondly that, within the inquisitorial event, Pierre *played* the part of a "*rusticus*". In opposition to Pascal's proverb, he found that it was more effective in the face of inquisition to take the role of the "*rusticus*", using the excuses of drink and stupidity to disarm the words he had spoken.⁶² But it is equally clear that Pierre was not stupid. If Pierre represents 'orality' – and I think that he *can* – just as Fournier

⁶⁰ *Poésies complètes du troubadour Peire Cardenal (1180-1278)*, ed. R. LAVAUD (Toulouse, 1957), p. 206: "*E en loc de matinas an us ordes trobatz / Que jazon ab putana trol-l solelhs es levatz / Enans canton baladas e prozels trasgitatz / Abans conquerran Dieu Cayfas o Pilatz*". English translation in: *Anthology of Troubadour Lyric Poetry*, ed. and trans. A.R. PRESS (Edinburgh, 1971), p. 299.

⁶¹ *Registre*, p. 148. Fournier, p. 52.

⁶² Note that this holds true whether or not one believes that Pierre was 'truly' drunk; the fact that Pierre tries out a number of different positions and stories over the course of his interviews indicates a degree of agency and choice over what particular elements are presented within his confession. My analysis of 'tactics' within discourse is drawn from: M. DE CERTEAU, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S.F. RENDALL (London, 1984).

represents 'literacy' or 'textuality', then it is important to rethink how these 'cultures' came into contact. Isobel Hofmeyr has suggested that "there are no automatic consequences that follow from the introduction of literacy ... At the same time, however ... *the idea of orality* and that of literacy operated in opposition" [her emphasis].⁶³ Pierre, and others like him, illustrate this point.⁶⁴ Both literacy and orality, we might say, have different *potentials* – but they do not have inevitable consequences or characteristics. Whilst we might still invoke the hermeneutic of 'two cultures' or of 'orality *vs* literacy', recognising that they have a valency as oppositions constructed and deployed within medieval language, we must recognise that the various positions, speech-acts and subjectivities that are in part produced by these oppositions, nevertheless cannot be wholly subsumed within them. Furthermore, when they come into conflict – or rather, when people come into conflict – orality and literacy can be seen as elements of subject positions. As such, they are not pre-given identities, but rather can be performed and re-performed, and, as Pierre's case I think shows, on occasion can be re-cited in oppositional and tactical ways. One takes a bull by the horn and a peasant by the tongue – and an inquisitor, perhaps, one takes by his literate prejudices. Historians and ethnographers might also heed this warning.⁶⁵

⁶³ HOFMEYR, *We Spend Our Lives*, p. 176.

⁶⁴ For some other 'non-heretical' deponents in the inquisitorial material, see: W.L. WAKEFIELD, "Some Unorthodox Popular Ideas of the Thirteenth Century", *Medievalia et Humanistica* n.s. 4 (1973), pp. 25-35. G. DE LLOBET, "Variété des croyances populaires au Comté de Foix au début du XIV^e siècle d'après les enquêtes de Jacques Fournier", in: *La religion populaire en Languedoc (XIII^e siècle et première moitié du XIV^e siècle)* (Toulouse, 1976: *Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 11), pp. 109-126.

⁶⁵ My thanks to the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of York for inviting me to contribute to this project, and for very much more besides; to Sarah Rees-Jones in particular for organising the session in which this paper was first delivered; and to Victoria Howell, Simon Middleton and Andy Wood for discussion and comments on earlier drafts.

Selby Abbey and its Twelfth-Century Historian

JANET BURTON

In 1066 there were no monasteries north of the river Trent. By 1215 the landscape of Yorkshire had been transformed by the building and agrarian activities of over sixty religious houses. The transformation began in the year 1069, when Benedict, a hermit and renegade monk of the great French monastery of St Germain of Auxerre, settled on the banks of the river Ouse at Selby. From that hermit settlement Selby grew to be one of the three autonomous Benedictine houses in Yorkshire, along with Whitby and St Mary's, York. As the earliest post-Conquest foundation in the county Selby holds a special place in the history of northern monasticism.¹ It is also unusually well-documented, from the days when Benedict left Auxerre until around the year 1174, in a combination of charter material, surviving in its thirteenth-century cartulary, and its foundation history, the *Historia Selebiensis Monasterii*. It is this narrative which is the subject of my paper.

First, I should put the *Historia* in the context of historical writing in northern monasteries. Of the histories compiled within the walls of the medieval monasteries of Yorkshire, modern historians have tended to concentrate their attention on a group of three Cistercian texts, produced at the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century. These are the foundation history of Byland and Jervaulx, compiled as a single sequence by Abbot Philip of Byland between 1196 and 1198,² the history of Kirkstall,³ whose author is unknown,

¹ For the latest treatment of the monastic expansion in Yorkshire, see: J. BURTON, *The Monastic Order in Yorkshire, 1069-1215* (Cambridge, 1999: *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought*, fourth series 40).

² Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Dodsworth 63, fols. 9-31 and 42-56. The texts are printed in: W. DUGDALE, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. J. CALEY, H. ELLIS and B. BANDINEL, 6 volumes in 8 (London, 1817-1830), v, pp. 349-354 (Byland) and pp. 568-574 (Jervaulx). For comment

but who may well have been Hugh, monk of Kirkstall, the man invited to write the third and most famous of them all, the *Narratio de Fundatione* of Kirkstall's mother house of Fountains.⁴ This was commissioned by Abbot John of York (1203-1211) and completed over a long period of time. It is the longest, and most elaborate, of the northern Cistercian histories, and also the one which most loudly proclaims a Cistercian identity for the monastery.

Because they form a distinctive group these Cistercian histories overshadow historical compilations from all three Yorkshire houses of Black Monks, although all these Benedictine writings predate the Cistercian ones. Abbot Stephen, founder abbot of St Mary's, York, who was dead by 1113, composed a brief account of the foundation. Doubts have been cast on the authenticity of this narrative, but I would argue for its early date.⁵ From Whitby we have an even briefer text, the *Memorial of Foundation and Benefactions*, which is little more than a short narrative by way of introduction to a list of the abbey endowments.⁶ And finally, we have the *Historia* of Selby Abbey. The Selby history is a fine piece of work, and throws considerable light on the cultural and intellectual milieu in which its monk-author was writing. It is all the more valuable for what it tells of learning and literacy at Selby in the light of the poor survival of the abbey library. Ker and Watson were able to identify only three manuscripts from Selby.⁷ These are a twelfth-century manuscript of Bede, which Anne Lawrence has more recently suggested shows affinities in its decoration with Canterbury;⁸ a fourteenth-century manuscript of Augustine;

see: J. BURTON, "The abbeys of Byland and Jervaulx and the problems of the English Savigniacs", in: *Monastic Studies* 2, ed. J. LOADES (Bangor, 1991), pp. 119-131.

³ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 722, fols. 129-139, ed. and trans. E.K. CLARK, "The Foundation of Kirkstall Abbey", in: *Miscellanea* (1895: *Thoresby Society* 4), pp. 169-208.

⁴ Cambridge, Trinity College, MS Gale O.I.79, printed in: *Memorials of the Abbey of St Mary of Fountains*, 3 volumes, ed. J.R. WALBRAN, J. RAINE and J.T. FOWLER (1863-1918: *Surtees Society* 42, 67 and 130), I.

⁵ Printed from Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 39, in: DUGDALE, *Monasticon*, III, pp. 544-546. An earlier and more reliable manuscript text is to be found in London, British Library, MS Additional 38816, fols. 29v-34v. For comment see: BURTON, *Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, pp. 13-14 and pp. 35-38.

⁶ *Cartularium Abbatiae de Whiteby*, ed. J.C. ATKINSON, 2 volumes (1879-1881: *Surtees Society* 69 and 72), I, pp. 1-10.

⁷ *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books*, ed. N. KER (second edition; London, 1964: *Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks* 3), p. 177, and *Supplement*, ed. A.G. WATSON (London, 1987: *Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks* 15), p. 61.

⁸ A. LAWRENCE, "The artistic influence of Durham manuscripts", in: *Anglo-Norman Durham 1093-1193*, ed. D. ROLLASON, M. HARVEY and M. PRESTWICH (Woodbridge, 1994),

and a set of Easter Tables from the twelfth century. If, as I argue, the *Historia* is not just a Selby composition, but its medieval manuscript probably a product of the Selby scriptorium, then this manuscript can be added, with some degree of confidence, to the corpus of surviving Selby manuscripts.

In this paper I would like to examine the witness to the *Historia*, the circumstances in which the *Historia* was written, its purposes, and its sources, and to suggest what this has to tell us about literary activities in this one Yorkshire monastery.

Manuscript and printing

The text of the *Historia* was published in 1891 in the first volume of *The Coucher Book of Selby Abbey*.⁹ The editor, J.T. Fowler, used a seventeenth-century transcript for his printing. In the 1960s, however, a French scholar identified a twelfth-century manuscript of the work, which is now Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Latin MS 10940.¹⁰ From the handwriting the manuscript would appear to date from the late twelfth century. The final paragraph of the history gives the date of writing as 1174, the 106th year of the abbey's existence, and the fourteenth of Abbot Gilbert de Vere.¹¹ The manuscript is thus not too far removed in time from the date of composition. There is clear evidence that it was in the possession of the monastery of Auxerre. First, it is headed, in a later hand, "*Monasterii Sancti Germanii Autissiodorensis*". Moreover, the composite volume in which it is preserved also contains a later text of the *Gesta* of the abbots of Auxerre. Fowler pointed to evidence in the manuscript he was using that the copyist was unfamiliar with English phrases, and suggested that its exemplar was probably French, from Auxerre. However, there is no such evidence from Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Latin MS 10940. On folio 13r the copyist has written the name of the river "*Derewente*" with the runic character *wynn* for the "w", where the transcript that Fowler used had a "p".¹² Similarly on folios 15v and 17v thorn has been transcribed correctly in

pp. 451-469, p. 466.

⁹ *The Coucher Book of Selby Abbey*, ed. J.T. FOWLER, 2 volumes (1891-1893: *Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series* 10 and 13), I, pp. 1-54.

¹⁰ P. JANIN, "Note sur le manuscrit latin 10940 de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris, contenant l'*Historia Selebiensis Monasterii* et les *Gesta abbatum Sancti Germani Autissiodorensis*", *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes* 127 (1969), pp. 216-224.

¹¹ See plate 1.

¹² *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, p. 13.

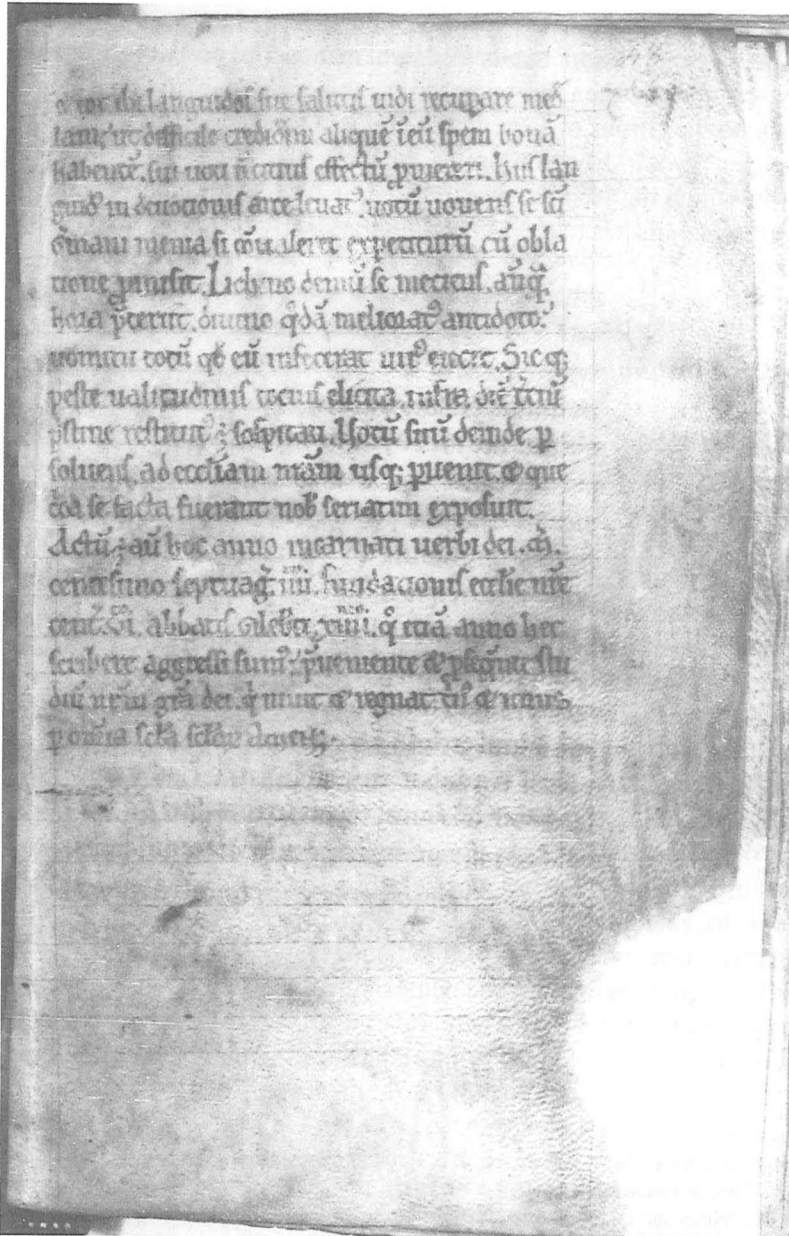


Plate 1: Paris, BN, Latin MS 10940, folio 48r: The concluding paragraph of the *Historia Selebiensis Monasterii*.

(Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris)

the name “*Roupeclif*”,¹³ and it is used again on folio 18r in the phrase “*cum saca & soca & tol & tem & infangenþef*”. The scribe of the manuscript happily used English phrases, and evidently felt no need to gloss or explain them. There seems to be no reason to doubt, therefore, that the manuscript is English in origin, and, as the text was composed at Selby, the manuscript is most likely to be a product of the Selby scriptorium. It may be the original, but there are corrections to the text, and it is more likely that Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Latin MS 10940 is a contemporary or near contemporary copy of the original, made at Selby, and that it was sent to the abbey at Auxerre, with which, as we shall see, Selby had close links, at least in its early years.

Composition, purpose and content of the Historia

What were the circumstances of writing? In the preface the anonymous author addresses an unknown patron, who had long urged him to undertake the work, and when he refused, had enlisted the support of the prior. Under this combined pressure the author had capitulated. This is all quite conventional, as is the author’s claim that his reluctance to write stemmed from his youth – his age is given as 22 – his deficiencies and his ignorance – the last two claims belied by his obvious scholarship. As to why a history was written in 1174 we can only conjecture, and I will return to this question at the end of the paper. For the moment I will just say that there appears to have been no particular crisis at Selby in the 1170s, which might have given rise to the production. 1174 was well into the abbacy of Gilbert de Vere, so the compilation was not due to a new abbot taking office and deciding to commission a history. The challenge posed to the Benedictines by the advent to Yorkshire of the new monastic orders, particularly the Cistercians, belonged to the 1130s through to the 1150s, and the work does not, therefore, seem to be a response to that rivalry, designed to attract and retain recruits and patrons by stressing the antiquity of Selby. So, we have no reason to believe that the purpose of the *Historia* was anything but what was stated, that the time had come for the circumstances of the foundation to be set down in writing. There was, in the monastery, both a monk whose learning equipped him to undertake the task, and the written materials which he needed for his research.

The work is divided into two sections of numbered chapters, each preceded by a table of contents. The first part, which deals with the period from the

¹³ *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, p. 15.

foundation to the resignation of Abbot Durand in 1134 or 1135, comprises thirty-five chapters (folios 3r-26r). The author had intended to finish there, as the bridging chapter between the two parts, which serves as a preface to the second, explains. The second part (folios 26r-48r) comprises thirty-seven chapters, which take the history from 1135 to 1174. The break is not just chronological, however, for the character of the *Historia* changes. Part One is concerned with the circumstances of foundation and the development of the abbey fortunes under its first four abbots, particularly Abbot Hugh (1096 or 1097-1122).¹⁴ Part Two concentrates much more on the miracles of St Germanus, many of which are associated with the disorders experienced by the abbey and the town in the reign of king Stephen.

The stated aim of Part One was to record

qualiterque ecclesia Selebiensis fundata sit, que causa, quis modus foundationis extiterit, qui etiam fundatores fuerint.

how the church of Selby might have been founded, what might have been the reason, and what the method of foundation, and who the founders might have been.

On these points, the author tells us, he had gathered verbal information from the prior and other senior monks.¹⁵ The *Historia*, however, is not just a simple narrative. The story that it tells is concerned to stress two main themes. First, from the outset it links Selby to St Germanus, and to the great abbey of Auxerre, some hundred miles from Paris. The second theme is Selby as a royal abbey.

The importance of St Germanus, whom the author calls "almost the whole cause and substance of our narrative", is outlined in the first three chapters.¹⁶ The author explains something of his method: he intends to tell his readers the story of St Germanus and, more particularly St Germanus's finger, before the narrative proper commences, so that when the finger becomes important, he will not have to break into his main narrative with explanatory matter. He accordingly begins with the broader context for the foundation of Selby. There

¹⁴ For the eleventh- and twelfth-century abbots of Selby see: *The Heads of Religious Houses: England and Wales, 940-1216*, ed. D. KNOWLES, C.N.L. BROOKE and V.C.M. LONDON (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 69-70.

¹⁵ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Latin MS 10940, fol. 3v. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, p. 1. All quotations are drawn from the manuscript text, though for convenience I have also provided reference to Fowler's printing.

¹⁶ BN, Latin MS 10940, fols. 4v-6v. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, pp. 3-5: "*rotius pene nostre narrationis causa ... et materia*".

was a brother in the monastery of Auxerre, where the uncorrupt body of Germanus lay, who was sub-sacrist, and who had a special devotion to the saint. He decided to take something from his tomb, and so stole the middle finger of Germanus's right hand. Hardly surprisingly the saint did not let this theft go unavenged, and the finger was recovered. The body of Germanus was then placed in a safe tomb, to prevent further mishap, with a lamp burning outside it and a constant guard. The finger, which was not restored to Germanus, was kept separately, secured in an ivory casket. That is the context for the events which led – ultimately – to the foundation of Selby, and with this the historical narrative can begin.

At about the time Duke William invaded and subdued England there was a brother at Auxerre named Benedict. Benedict had been brought up at the abbey and served the abbot in a secular capacity. The time came when he had to choose knighthood or the habit, and he decided to become a monk, and quickly rose to become guardian of the relics and abbey sacrist. Benedict then experienced a vision of St Germanus, in which he appeared using the words of God to Abraham. He urged Benedict to leave his native land, and go to a place which Germanus had selected for him:

Est locus in Anglia vocaturque Selebia, meo provisus honori, mee laudis predestinatus obsequiis, mei nominis titulis celebris futurus et gloria. Qui super ripam Use fluminis situs, non plurimum distat ab Eboraca civitate.

There is a place in England and it is called Selby; it is set aside for my honour, predestined for service in my praise, and in the future it will be famous for the renown of my name and for my glory. Situated on the bank of the Ouse, it is not very far from the city of York.¹⁷

Benedict was told he could take the finger with him, and even told how to conceal it in his own arm, between the elbow and the shoulder – he was assured he would feel no pain. Benedict put the vision down to a bad dream and so ignored it. A second and a third time Germanus appeared – the third time threatening of the consequences of future disobedience. Benedict, terrified, did as he was commanded, and asked the chapter for permission to leave (without, however, revealing the true reason). He was not going to admit that the community was about to lose part of St Germanus. The chapter, understandably, was not willing to allow Benedict to leave, and so “compelled by necessity” (*“necessitate compulsus”*) Benedict stole the finger at night, and hid it in his own arm. Miraculously his arm when opened up did not bleed, and there was

¹⁷ BN, Latin MS 10940, fol. 7v. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, pp. 6-7.

no wound. He fled from the abbey. At daybreak his fellow monks searched the monastery and the town for him, and when they discovered the loss of the finger, crying sacrilege they followed him. They were unable to find the finger, and so returned to Auxerre, allowing Benedict to take ship for England.

This was where his adventures really began. For instead of asking directions to Selby he made his way to Salisbury. He was befriended by Edward of Salisbury, whom we are told was a man of wealth and standing, and who may have been the sheriff of Wiltshire of that name.¹⁸ Edward gave Benedict a gold phylactery for his relic, which the author described in detail, and which, the narrative states, was still to be seen at Selby in 1174, as was the linen altar cloth, woven in feather work, with Christ in Majesty, the Evangelists, Christ Crucified and the twelve Apostles.¹⁹ Why Salisbury? I suppose the two names are easily confused, and the *Historia* explained that Benedict thought that he had reached his destination because the name of Salisbury was known to him but that of Selby was not. However, he was rather worried when he remembered that Germanus had told him that the spot he had picked out for his church was on the river Ouse, not far from York, and when he started to look for them, he could find neither. It took a further vision of Germanus (who appeared "*subridens*", laughing) to advise him of his mistake, and Benedict took ship, probably from King's Lynn, with an interpreter provided by Edward, and headed for York. As he sailed along the Ouse, he miraculously recognized the place predestined for his settlement. He landed, and under an oak tree which the locals called "Strihac" he built a small dwelling. The year was 1069.²⁰

This takes us to the end of the tenth chapter of the *Historia*, and already one of the main themes is beginning to emerge, that is, the divine intervention of Germanus. Benedict's venture is represented solely in terms of the guidance of Germanus (and his finger) which he only reluctantly followed. What the author is beginning to do is to construct an identity for Selby, as the abbey of St Germanus, the English equivalent of Auxerre. The nature of Benedict's journey is not clear. The language suggests that he is to be seen as a hermit, rather than as the founder of an English dependency of a continental abbey, like many which were founded in the wake of Conquest. The *Historia* likens Benedict to Abraham; moreover, he is made to introduce himself as a "stranger

¹⁸ J.A. GREEN, *English Sheriffs to 1154* (London, 1990: *Public Record Office Handbooks* 24), p. 85.

¹⁹ BN, Latin MS 10940, fols. 9v-10v. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, pp. 9-10.

²⁰ BN, Latin MS 10940, fols. 11r-12v. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, pp. 10-12.

and pilgrim".²¹ There is no suggestion that Benedict came in company, other than that which he acquired en route. There developed no constitutional ties with Auxerre, and as far as we know no claims were ever made. Nevertheless, there are two grounds to support the narrative's claim that Benedict did indeed hail from Auxerre. One is the dedication of Selby to St Germanus, bishop and patron saint of Auxerre, a dedication unparalleled in medieval England outside Cornwall.²² The other is that a text of the *Historia* was sent to Auxerre over a hundred years after the foundation, which speaks of a close, if informal, relationship between the two houses as late as 1174.

I would suggest that we can see Benedict's venture, and adventure, as that of a type of monk not uncommon in the eleventh and twelfth century, one who was dissatisfied with monastic life inside a great monastery, and who turned instead to the eremitical life. The author of the *Historia* has taken this theme, and added the extra dimension of the divine intervention of Germanus, which begins with the saint's vision, and is embellished by the *furta sacra*. This is the first theme which the *Historia* develops, and it is sustained throughout the narrative in different ways. Germanus is shown consistently to have looked over the affairs of the monastery. In chapter 17 of Part One the author tells how a "prince of thieves", Swain son of Sigge, who roamed the woods round about with his band of robbers, tried to steal from the chapel, and was appropriately foiled by Germanus who made the thief's right arm stick to the chapel wall.²³ Rather more benignly he healed the son of Erneis de Burun, sheriff of York, thereby earning a substantial cash donation for the new house.²⁴ And when the waters of the Ouse burst their banks and flooded the town, the chapel dedicated to Germanus alone was saved.²⁵

Further, most of Part Two, from the deposition of Abbot Durand in 1134 or 1135, to 1174, is taken up with miracles. The agenda of the author of the *Historia* is rather different here. The underlying purpose is still to link Selby Abbey to Germanus, but the *Historia* does so now more forcibly through the compilation of miracles. Twenty-eight of the chapters are concerned with mira-

²¹ BN, Latin MS 10940, fol. 14v. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, pp. 14: "*advena et peregrinus*".

²² R.B. Dobson, "The first Norman abbey in Northern England", *Ampleforth Journal* 74 (1969), pp. 161-179. IDEM, "Les origines de l'abbaye Bénédictine de Selby dans le Yorkshire (1069-1100) et ses rapports avec Saint Germain d'Auxerre", *Etudes ligeriennes d'histoire et d'archéologie médiévales* (Paris, 1975), pp. 157-64.

²³ BN, Latin MS 10940, fol. 16r. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, p. 16.

²⁴ BN, Latin MS 10940, fols. 16r-17r. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, pp. 16-17.

²⁵ BN, Latin MS 10940, fol. 21r-v. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, pp. 22-3.

cles. The reason for writing is to glorify the church as that of St Germanus, but it is also for expressly, if conventional, didactic purposes. In chapter 5 of the second part the author states:

Ideo quippe, sicut dicit Gregorius, fiunt exteriora miracula ut mentes hominum ad interiora perducantur, quatinus per hoc quod mirum visibiliter ostenditur, ea que mirabilia sunt invisibilia credantur.

Thus, as Gregory says, miracles are done outwardly, so that the minds of men might be turned to inner things, and so that through this, which is shown visibly to be a wonder, those things which are more miraculous and invisible are to be believed.²⁶

And in chapter 8, after relating three miracles, he continues:

Hiis igitur tribus prelibatis exemplis diligenter, obsecro, prudens lector, adverte, quam sui quam suorum iniurie districtus ultor beatus Germanus existat. Hoc in libro miraculorum eius legimus, hoc exemplis inibi suppositis discimus, hoc in hostium nostrorum eventibus approbamus. Hoc quasi vulgare proverbium habentes in ore asserunt nostri seniores, dicentes, aut vix aut numquam aliquem se vidisse, qui beatum Germanum, vel furto, vel fraude, vel alicuius rei ablatione provocasset, qui sine alicuius experientia flagelli potuisset evadere. Alii puniuntur inopia, alii valitudine et infirmitate flagellantur, quidam quod durius ante mortem integritate memorie, quidam sensus sanitate privantur.

I beg you, wise reader, pay heed to these three examples which I have given you, how the blessed Germanus was the rigorous avenger of injury to himself and to his own. We may read this in the book of his miracles, we may learn this by the examples related therein, we may prove this in the fates of our enemies. Our elders asserted this, using, as it were, a common proverb, saying that they had scarcely, indeed never, seen anyone who could provoke St Germanus, either through theft, or fraud, or the taking away of anything, and escape without sustaining some penalty. Some were punished through experiencing dire need, others were struck down by weakness or illness, some were deprived of memory before their death, others of the health of their senses.²⁷

The second part of the *Historia* is largely a miracle collection, and the moral is clearly spelt out. Germanus is portrayed as a vengeful saint. Interestingly, we can see the miracles dividing into two categories. Those which happened between 1135 and the resignation of Elias Paynel in 1152 are all related

²⁶ BN, Latin MS 10940, fol. 31v. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, pp. 34-35 and note. The reference is to: *Sancti Gregorii Magni XL Homilia in Evangeliiis, Liber primus, Homilia IV*, on Matthew 10, 5-10, ed. MIGNE, PL 76, cols. 1089-1094, cols. 1093-1094: "*ad hoc quippe visibilia miracula corruscant, ut corda videntium ad fidem invisibilium pertrahant, ut per hoc quod mirum foris agitur hoc quod intus est longe mirabilius esse sentiantur*".

²⁷ BN, Latin MS 10940, fol. 32v. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, p. 36.

to the disturbances of Stephen's reign, when Selby was at the heart of local, baronial rivalry.²⁸ In this period, Germanus performs miracles such as striking down the man who tried to break down the doors of the church, the man who snatched a horse from the cemetery, or the man who stole from the church. Furthermore, he saves knights who have been injured, ransomed, or hanged – he takes on some of the characteristics of St James of Compostella and St Leonard of Noblat.²⁹ These were the miracles of Germanus avenging the insults to his church and his own people. After 1152 the nature of the miracles changes. Germanus could turn his hand to healing; and those who were healed were mostly women, children, and peasants.

So, the first and predominant theme of this foundation history is the glorification of St Germanus, and through him, of the abbey which held his relic. The *Historia Selebiensis Monasterii* is, in the second part, a *Historia Sancti Germani*. The two are interchangeable. The cult of St Germanus was a powerful weapon to create and sustain Selby's reputation. So too were the links which it could claim with the Norman kings. And the second theme of Part One of the *Historia* is the establishment of the reputation of Selby as a royal foundation. Now it is interesting that the author makes no excessive claims for Selby. When the author comments on the coming of Benedict to Selby in 1069 he remarks:

Ingens etiam raritas monachorum que tunc temporis extitit, duplo ad Benedictum honorandum et colendum studia cunctorum excitavit. Per totam enim Eboraci syriam excepta Dunelmensi congregatione nec monachus nec monachorum locus aliquis in illis diebus facile valuit reperiri.

The great scarcity of monks at that time stirred the zeal of all people doubly to honour and to worship Benedict. For throughout the whole of Yorkshire neither a monk nor a place for monks could easily be found, except the congregation of Durham.³⁰

Had the author realised that the introduction of Benedictine monks to Durham postdated the foundation of Selby he could have claimed for his own abbey the position of primacy in post-Conquest monasticism. He did not do so,

²⁸ On which see: P. DALTON, *Conquest, Anarchy and Lordship: Yorkshire, 1066-1154* (Cambridge, 1994: *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, fourth series* 27), p. 171 and p. 179. BURTON, *Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, pp. 201-202.

²⁹ BN, Latin MS 10940, fols. 30v-32r and fols. 34v-39r. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, p. pp. 33-6 and pp. 38-43.

³⁰ BN, Latin MS 10940, fol. 14r. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, p. 14.

but he *did* stress the part which William the Conqueror played in its foundation.

What determined that Benedict's small cell on the banks of the Ouse was to develop as a Benedictine abbey was the intervention of the sheriff, Hugh Fitz Baldric, who introduced Benedict to the king. Hugh had spotted Benedict's settlement as he patrolled the Ouse, and realising that the hermit-monk had settled on royal demesne, conducted him to the king who was then at York³¹ – this was at Christmas 1069-70, in the aftermath of the harrying of the north. King William, doubtless seeing the potential in the creation of a powerful royal foundation in an area of political unrest, granted permission for Benedict to remain on his lands, and added substantial endowments. William Rufus also intervened in the abbey affairs, and in a rather curious transaction granted the abbey to the archbishop of York to hold as the archbishop of Canterbury held Rochester.³² The precise meaning is not clear, but it seems to have implied that the abbey passed from royal to archiepiscopal patronage – and the relationship between the archbishops and the abbeys is an interesting line of enquiry, but one which is beyond the scope of this paper. Now, the status of Selby as a royal abbey was somewhat eclipsed when William II took over the patronage of St Mary's, York, which, given its location, was an even better candidate for royal sponsorship.³³ However, the Selby author does not miss the opportunity to stress the links which his abbey enjoyed with the Norman kings, in order to bolster the reputation of the house. This theme is subordinate to that of the intervention of Germanus, but it is a significant one, which emphasizes the importance and priority of Selby.

Sources and style

These are some of the general themes in the *Historia*, which reveal something of its purposes. In investigating this text as an example of monastic learning we also need to look at the question of the sources to which the author had access, books which might have been in the abbey library. First, it is clear that he had access to the legends of St Germanus, both the story about the first *furta sacra* by the monk, as well as the second by Benedict, and the miracles which oc-

³¹ BN, Latin MS 10940, fols. 14r-15v. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, pp. 14-15.

³² On William's grants to Selby, see: BURTON, *Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, p. 27. On the grant of the abbey to the archbishop, see: *Ibidem*, p. 31.

³³ BURTON, *Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, pp. 39-43.

curred at Selby. These may have been preserved orally, but I would argue that the sheer number of miracles of Germanus in his manifestations at Selby and the surrounding area indicate that there was a written miracle collection preserved at Selby. In a passage quoted above the author states that “we may read in the book of his miracles” – and this is a phrase which he uses more than once. This may refer to the *Historia* itself, but it is more likely to refer to a life or miracle collection preserved in the abbey library. That the author claims to be able to date one of the miracles to 1167 and another to 1168, as well as to name some of the beneficiaries and their provenance, suggests that miracles were being recorded at the abbey. Second, there may have been a written account of the foundation, in a more primitive form, or our monk may have been relying, as he claims, on the corporate memory of the community about the foundation, and the traditions surrounding the artefacts preserved in the abbey church. The author certainly used charter material. He does not, as the Byland and Jervaulx history does, copy charters into the text verbatim. However, he can give an accurate account of the early benefactors: William I, Archbishop Thomas I of York, Guy de Rannelcurt, and Geoffrey de la Wirche, who between them laid the foundation of Selby’s territorial wealth; and one chapter is a paraphrase of a royal charter.³⁴

The Selby author was clearly a man of learning. His Latin is sophisticated and elegant, and he could draw on a considerable range of biblical, patristic and classical works. His writing is liberally scattered with references to the Old and New Testament. One example will suffice to characterize his use of biblical sources. Part One, chapters 23-24, tell of how, following an incident when Benedict imposed an excessive punishment on two monks who stole from the abbey treasury, the king ordered Abbot Stephen of York to arrest him. When the two abbots met, and Stephen explained his orders, Benedict snatched his pastoral staff and shook it in Stephen’s face, defying him to arrest him. Our author has him use a version of the words of Christ in the arrest in the garden recorded in Matthew 26, 55: “are you come to arrest me, as against a thief with swords and staffs?”.³⁵ Benedict asserts that his lord, by which he means St Germanus, will prevent any from approaching him. Abbot Stephen, a “wise and mature man”, prudently withdrew, and like the three magi “departed into his

³⁴ BN, Latin MS 10940, fols. 15r-v and fols. 17r-18r. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, p. 15 and pp. 17-19.

³⁵ Matthew 26, 55: “*tanquam ad latronem existis cum gladiis et fustibus comprehendere me?*” Compare with BN, Latin MS 10940, fol. 20r: “*tanquam latronem comprehendere me venistis. Nunc ergo gladios et fustes arripite quia viribus utendum est*”. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, p. 21.

own region by another way".³⁶ This is not an inept juxtaposition of biblical episodes; it is figural: Benedict is threatened, like Christ, with betrayal, and Stephen is portrayed as a wise man, following divine advice.

The Selby author was well read in the patristics. We have already seen how the author quotes from Gregory the Great's homilies on the importance of miracles, and he also refers to the *Moralia in Job* on the nature of punishment, and Augustine's letter to Marcellinus, on the same theme.³⁷ The Selby monk's access to classical learning is attested by his frequent references to Cicero, Cato, and Homer.³⁸ It may be that he had access to anthologies, containing snippets of classical works, but it is worth drawing attention to a roughly contemporary library catalogue from Benedictine Whitby, which under the general title "*Isti sunt libri grammatici*" lists "*Tullius de Amicitia et alius de Senectute, Cato*" and "*Homerus*", which suggests that the two libraries may have had some items in common.³⁹

Finally, our author was able to turn his hand to the composition of verses in praise of the abbots of Selby. One of those whom he most admired was Abbot Hugh, who, among other achievements, was responsible for an extensive building programme at the abbey. Hugh died in 1122, and was buried in the chapter house: "concerning whom, by way of epitaph, we thus celebrate in verse" ("*de quo vice epitaphii sic cecinimus elegiace*"):

Hugo decus morum, decor orbis, flos monachorum
Cum ruit omne ruit, quoad monachile fuit
Lux anime viva, via vite, pacis oliva
Cum fugit, et vadit, ius, decus, ordo cadit.⁴⁰

³⁶ BN, Latin MS 10940, fol. 20r. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, p. 21: "*per aliam viam reversus est in regionem suam*". This is a direct quotation from Matthew 2, 12.

³⁷ BN, Latin MS 10940, fols. 32v-33r. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, p. 36. See: *Sancti Gregorii Magni ... Moraliū Libri sive Expositio in Librum B. Job*, ed. MIGNE, PL 75-76, especially PL 76, cols. 55-56: "*Omnis ergo divina percussio, aut purgatio in nobis vitae praesentis est, aut initium poenae sequentis*". Augustine, *Epistola* 138, *Augustinus ad Marcellinum*, ed. MIGNE, PL 33, cols. 525-535, col. 531: "... nihil est infelicius felicitate peccantium, qua poenalis nutritur impunitas, et mala voluntas velut hostis interior roboratur". (Compare with the *Historia*: "*nichil infelicius felicitate peccantium qua penalis nutritur impunitas, et mala consuetudo velut hostis interior roboratur*").

³⁸ For example: BN, Latin MS 10940, fol. 15v. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, p. 16.

³⁹ For the catalogue see: *Cartularium de Whiteby* I, p. 341. *English Benedictine Libraries: the Shorter Catalogues*, ed. R. SHARPE, J.P. CARLEY, R.M. THOMSON and A.G. WATSON (London, 1996: *Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues* 4), pp. 633-642.

⁴⁰ The verse continues for another thirty lines: BN, Latin MS 10940, fols. 23v-24r. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, pp. 25-26.

The verses are leonine hexameters, rhyming internally, with the rhyme between the strong caesura and the end of the line.⁴¹ When Abbot Walter died in 1143 he too was buried in the chapter house: “to whose praise thus is spoken in elegaic song”.⁴² Here the author produced a twenty-two line verse of “*unisoni*”, or ‘single-sound’ leonine hexameters, with four rhymes in a couplet, that is, with rhyme at the strong caesura, and end-of-line with end-of-line.⁴³

Stella cadit cleri, perit heres almus Homeri
Dum mors Walteri demetit ora meri
Tullius herede, parili Cato, Pallas et ede
Privatur sede Neupma, Minerva pede.

And 1160 saw the death of Abbot Germanus: “to him, therefore, as to the others who rest there [in the chapter house] we have adapted an epitaph in this way, in hexameter verses”.⁴⁴ This twenty-six line paragraph of rhyming couplets is also a single-sound leonine hexameter.

Tristis ade vitio, vitiis corrumpitur orbis
Qui ruit exitio, lapsu, discrimine morbis
Mundus abit, nec habet quod nec abeundo moretur
Quod tenet, aut quod habet, nec stat, nec stare meretur.

The scribe of Paris Bibliothèque Nationale, Latin MS 10940, has, in the cases of both the epitaphs of Abbot Walter and Abbot Germanus, drawn attention to the nature of the rhymes.⁴⁵

By way of conclusion I would like to return to a question raised earlier, that is, why the *Historia* might have been composed in 1174, fourteen years into the abbacy of Gilbert de Vere. There are two suggestions which I would offer, one that it reflects a change in the attitude of the Selby monks to their saint, and the second that it owes much to external influence. First, the *Historia* provides evidence of a change in the cult of St Germanus in the abbacy of

⁴¹ A convenient summary of Latin verse forms used by medieval British authors appears in: A.G. RIGG, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature 1066-1422* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 319.

⁴² BN, Latin MS 10940, fols. 29v-30r. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, pp. 32-33: “*ad cuius laudem sic elegiaco carmine dictum est*”.

⁴³ RIGG, *Anglo-Latin Literature*, p. 319.

⁴⁴ BN, Latin MS 10940. fol. 41r-v. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, p. 46: “*cui etiam sicut ceteris qui inibi requiescunt epithaphium hoc modo versibus exametris adaptavimus*”.

⁴⁵ See plates 2 (fol. 29v) and 3 (fol. 41v).

caritatis condescensione clementer inseruit. Summa siq;
dem prudentia dissipata congregans. & modesta temp
antia congregata conseruant. p̄caunt sumope ne
in suo tēpe dom̄ alicui iōmodi dispendiū. ul' alie
dampni piculū pat̄ eret. Sic itaq; cōstanti uigilā
tia dū & interiora purgata auicū. & exteriora
p̄teget ab inimicis. foris & suauit̄ disponens oīa.
pacifico & tranquille p̄ficiens inuierſa. cursū pasto
ralis officii ser̄ amoxū cūculo tūmauit. Dū
no q̄ppe attrinatus in cōmodo. p̄dit h̄ uatū ho
minē exuētū miḡat a seculo. & in monasterii ca
pitulo. cū summe uenerationis obsequio. cū mag
ne deuotionis reuerentia. traditū; sepulture.
Ad cui' laudem sic elegiaco carmine dictū est;

Sella cadit cleri. perit heres almus hom
Dum moſ Walterr. demittit oīa m
Tullius. herede. parit. cato. pallas & e
Pruat. sede. neupma. cinerua. pe
Claudicat ars dia. titubat iam philosoph
Cumq; theoria. iuncta sophia p
Plangit pierides uester ruit alni atri
Quemq; p̄munt lapides. plangit amica fi
Ar̄ p̄t. & clerus. q̄a corrūt aliter home
Orbis honor uerul. religionis h
Artib; armatus. morū p̄b̄nate p̄ba
Legib; ornatul. artib; art e

Plate 2: Paris, BN, Latin MS 10940, folio 29v: Verse epitaph for Abbot Walter.
(Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris)

Mundus abire nec h^{ab}et. qd' n' abeundo mori
 qd' tenet. aut qd' h^{ab}et. nec stat. nec stare mori
 Sic uiget. ut p^{er}eat. sic i. ut desinat e^{ss}e.
 Sic stat. ut intereat. subit hoc caro qd' nec
 Sic hominu' gen^{eri}. constat generale per
 Sic nro cin^{ere}. cinere comune subire.
 Omnia preter^{sum}. cetera mortalia f^{ine}.
 Et subito per^{it}. misera data sorte ru^{ine}.
 Hec sors let^{alis}. sors aspera condit^{io}.
 Sors mala. plena m^{isericordie}. decus auferit religi^{onis}.
 Occidit. & per^{it}. d^{ec}et decor^{is}. omnis hon^{oris}.
 Cu' pius inter^{it}. Germanus gema dec^{oris}.
 Una uite spec^{ul}. pietatis formula. m^{ortis}.
 Exemplar. tum^{ul}. sorte sorte re^u.
 Laude uirū cup^{it}. attollere tā speci^{alem}.
 Deficio. nequ^{it}. hominē deservire t^{alem}.
 Quē scio. quē uo^{lo}. maiore laudis hon^{ore}.
 Quā uolo. quā ual^{eo}. p^{er}stingere mercede u^{ir}.
 Hoc p^{ro}cor ergo. p^{ro} laudis honore dic^{am}.
 Qd' nequit asce^{re}. sua qd' pia uita mer^{etur}.
 Dicere me lic^{et}. qd' n' reticere lic^{et}.
 Sic licet m^{er}. caro. sp^{irit}us astra ten^{ebit}.
 Ueribus esca d^{atur}. hec. hic collega sup^{er}.
 Iure coapt^{atur}. hic celis. ista cau^{er}.
Hec inferre lectioni cedeat. x. x. vi.
 miracula que circa seuerū suū ipdicationis

Plate 3: Paris, BN, Latin MS 10940, folio 41v: Verse epitaph for Abbot Germanus.
 (Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris)

Abbot Germanus, formerly a monk of St Albans, then prior of the dependency of St Albans at Tynemouth, who was brought to Selby by Henry Murdac, archbishop of York, to replace Abbot Elias Paynel in 1152. This is, as was mentioned above, roughly the date at which the nature of the miracles recorded in the *Historia* begins to change. Moreover, a statement by the author bears witness to an apparent innovation in the activities of Germanus at this time: he notes the desirability of inserting details of miracles which happened at the saint's feretory when it was being taken around on a pilgrimage of preaching by the monks.

Nec inserere lectioni tedeat miracula que circa feretrum suum in predicationis peregrinatione beatus Germanus dignatus ostendere. Nam cum in supradicti Abbatis Germani temporibus aliquantulum in predicationis gratia fratres cum feretro laborarent, se de suis curam habere quam maximam signis multis plurimisque prodigiis confessor eximius frequenter ostendit.

I should not delay in mentioning for the reader the miracles which the blessed Germanus deemed worthy to demonstrate around his feretory during the pilgrimage of preaching. For when in the time of the aforesaid Abbot Germanus the monks travelled with the feretory a little, for the sake of preaching, the outstanding confessor frequently showed himself to have the greatest care for his own by very many signs and wonders.⁴⁶

One of these miracles concerned a woman in whose house the company was entertained, whose hospitality towards the monks left much to be desired.⁴⁷ Another centred on the dying sister of the priest in whose church the monks were spending the night, who was cured at the feretory.⁴⁸ The beginning of these preaching tours accounts for the miracles starting to be more widely dispersed, at Sherburn in Elmet, Pontefract, and Dunnington. St Germanus was coming to the people, not waiting for them to come to him. There was one such preaching tour on which a horse, laden with vestments, relics and maniples, fell off a bridge into a swollen river. St Germanus intervened to save the coffers, though whether he bothered about the horse is not recorded.⁴⁹

Accordingly, we can see an acceleration of the cult of St Germanus in the time of Abbot Germanus, that is, between 1152 and 1160 – and is it coincidence that this acceleration apparently took place in the time of the abbot who bore the same name as the saint himself, and who, moreover, hailed from St

⁴⁶ BN, Latin MS 10940, fols. 41v–42r. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, pp. 46–47.

⁴⁷ BN, Latin MS 10940, fol. 43v. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, pp. 48–49.

⁴⁸ BN, Latin MS 10940, fols. 44v–45r. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, p. 50.

⁴⁹ BN, Latin MS 10940, fol. 42r. *Selby Coucher*, ed. FOWLER, I, p. 47.

Albans, the abbey which was home to the earliest British martyr-saint, and an important pilgrimage centre? However, it was not until well into the abbacy of his successor, Gilbert de Vere, that the *Historia*, was compiled. Gilbert was a member of a local noble family, and brother of Guy de Vere. We are told little about him, and it is unfortunate that after the death of Gilbert's predecessor, the author showed little interest in the internal affairs of the abbey. However, there are suggestions of continued royal interest in the abbey and the office of abbot. After Gilbert's death in 1188 the abbey went into royal custody, and the next two abbots, both promoted from the office of prior of Selby, were confirmed by the king, and at least one is described as a royal appointment. Selby's abbots, therefore – given the royal connections of the abbey – are likely to have been visitors to the king's court, and cognisant with events in the south. They can scarcely have been unaware of the cult developing at Canterbury in the years after the death of Thomas Becket in 1170, and of the lives being produced by the Canterbury monks. Is it too far-fetched to see the composition of the *Historia*, and the collection of the miracles of Germanus, as a northern answer to Thomas Becket? The *Historia* could be seen as an attempt to build on the work of Abbot Germanus in extending the reputation of St Germanus through preaching tours. If so, their success was modest. The cult of Germanus of Selby never seems to have been important on anything but a local scale,⁵⁰ and in the 1220s York found its challenge to Thomas of Canterbury in its own archbishop, William Fitz Herbert, rumoured to have died from a poisoned chalice. Nevertheless, the promotion of the pilgrimage trade at Canterbury, and the growing reputation of St Thomas – enhanced through the written lives produced by the Canterbury monks – could well have provided an external stimulus for parallel dual activities at Selby. Whatever the circumstances the unnamed monk produced a work of scholarship, style and sophistication, which speaks highly of the level of learning at the monastery by the last quarter

⁵⁰ *Monastery and Society in the Late Middle Ages: Selected Account Rolls from Selby Abbey, Yorkshire, 1398-1537*, ed. and trans. J.H. TILLOTSON (Woodbridge, 1988), pp. 217-219 and p. 222. The account rolls of Brother John Haldenby, the sacrist and keeper of the fabric at Selby, show that in 1446-1447 £9 14s 10d was received in the money box ("stipite") of St Germanus; 16s 8d was received from offerings to the high altar at the feast of the burial of St Germanus (1 October), 6s at the feast of his death (31 July), and 3d at the feast of his ordination. In the same year 20d was expended on renewing a rail before the image of St Germanus, and 4d for making 10 pounds of wax for the same image. *Ibidem*, p. 244. In the year 1434-1435 Brother John Acastre, almoner and keeper of the Selby chantry of Walter Skirlaw, bishop of Durham, purchased: 6 quarters of rye to distribute at the festivals of the death and burial of St Germanus, 1000 red herrings for distribution on the feast of his death, and one bullock for distribution at the feast of his burial. The total cost was £2 7s 10d.

of the twelfth century. The *Historia* provided the monks of Selby with a sense of their own past, with an identity as members of the community of St Germanus, and with status as a royal foundation. What better edificatory material could there be for periods of "*lectio divina*" than a work which combined didactic material and a sense of the monastery's history, and which provided as well a fund of teaching and preaching material for the laity who worshipped in the nave of the abbey church.

Did Medieval English Women Read Augustine's *Confessiones*? Constructing Feminine Interiority and Literacy in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries¹

LINDA OLSON

Do not consider of less account among the rest the book of Augustine's *Confessiones*, which may pour divine affection into you more deeply.²

So runs the readerly advice of the Benedictine monk Goscelin of Saint Bertin as he writes his *Liber confortatorius* in the early 1080s as a letter of guidance for his spiritual daughter Eve, specifically providing in this section of his text a "table of writings" to satiate her appetite for spiritual nutrition.³ First a child oblate and nun in the Benedictine convent at Wilton, and then a recluse on the continent,⁴ Eve is the only English woman with whom the

¹ I would like to thank Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, Mark Vessey and Maidie Hilmo for reading an earlier version of this paper and providing helpful comments and criticisms. I am also grateful to Felicity Riddy and Nicholas Watson for their valuable insights.

² Goscelin of Saint Bertin, *Liber confortatorius*, III, ed. C.H. TALBOT, "The *Liber confortatorius* of Goscelin of Saint Bertin", *Analecta monastica* series 3, *Studia Anselmiana* 37 (1955), pp. 1-117, p. 80, ll. 35-36: "*Nec librum inter cetera postponas Augustini confessionum, qui tibi diuinum altius instillet affectum*". English translations of all Latin texts are my own.

³ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, III, p. 79, l. 7: "*Mensa scripturarum*". On the date of the *Liber confortatorius*, see: TALBOT, "*Liber confortatorius*", p. 8. S.K. ELKINS, *Holy Women of Twelfth-Century England* (Chapel Hill and London, 1988), p. 21.

⁴ Eve was given to Wilton by her parents in 1065 when she was seven years old; she left Wilton to live an eremitic life on the continent at Angers around 1080. On Eve's life and her relationship with Goscelin, see especially: ELKINS, *Holy Women*, pp. 21-27. TALBOT, "*Liber confortatorius*", pp. 1-25 (Introduction). A. WILMART, "Ève et Goscelin I", *Revue Bénédictine*

surviving evidence so explicitly associates Augustine's *Confessiones*. For there are, to my knowledge, no writings by women in England in the eleventh and twelfth centuries which quote or echo the *Confessiones*, and no records linking either extant or lost manuscripts of the autobiography to the women's religious communities which, like the monasteries for men, were founded all over England during this period.⁵ There is, in fact, only one surviving medieval English copy of the *Confessiones* which can be associated with medieval women, and this is found in London, British Library MS Royal 5.C.V, a collection of Augustinian and other texts dating to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century.⁶ The inscription found in this manuscript assigns it to the Gilbertine 'house' of nuns and canons at Sempringham, and although it is particularly linked to one of the community's canons, who appears to have obtained the volume for his community, the Gilbertine nuns, since they were responsible for the community's books, would certainly have had access to the volume and thus to its *Confessiones*.⁷ If we focus exclusively on the eleventh and twelfth centuries, however, it is only on the continent that we find another woman

46 (1934), pp. 414-438. IDEM, "Ève et Goscelin II", *Revue bénédictine* 50 (1938), pp. 42-83. *The Life of King Edward Who Rests at Westminster Attributed to a Monk of St Bertin*, ed. and trans. F. BARLOW (London, 1962), pp.91-111 (Appendix C).

⁵ For the establishment of women's houses, see: ELKINS, *Holy Women*. For that of men's, see: D. KNOWLES, *The Monastic Order in England: A History of Its Development from the Times of St Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council (943-1216)* (Cambridge, 1940).

⁶ On MS Royal 5.C.V, see: G.F. WARNER and J.P. GILSON, *British Museum: Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections* 1 (London, 1921), p. 108. L. OLSON, *The Textual Construction of Monastic Interiority: Reading Augustine's Confessiones in England c.1066-c.1200*, 3 volumes (Unpublished D.Phil Dissertation, University of York, 1998), III *Appendices*, p.10. IDEM, "Reading Augustine's *Confessiones* in fourteenth-century England: John de Grandisson's fashioning of text and self", *Traditio* 52 (1997), pp. 201-257, p. 253.

⁷ The ownership and acquisition information is recorded in an early hand on fol. 1v of MS Royal 5.C.V: "*liber de domo de Sempringham ex impetratione Johannis de Glynton Canonici dicte domus*". On John de Glynton, see: A.B. EMDEN, *A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500* (Cambridge, 1963), p. 260. Both B. GOLDING, *Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertine Order c.1130-c.1300* (Oxford, 1995), p. 180 and pp. 184-185, and Elkins, in her study of the Gilbertine "*Institutes*", in: *Holy Women*, p.142, note how the libraries of Gilbertine communities were situated in the nuns's quarters, with the precentress of each house in charge of all the books belonging to her community, and manuscripts being passed to the house's canons through a turning window. It is thus reasonable to assume that the nuns of Sempringham would have had access to MS Royal 5.C.V, and since John de Glynton became a master of the order and the *Confessiones* in this manuscript are generously annotated by what appears to be more than one contemporary hand, it is possible that he and/or other members of his community added some of these *marginalia* to aid the literate nuns of Sempringham in reading this complex autobiographical and theological text.

connected directly to the *Confessiones*. Diemud of Wessobrunn (c.1057-1130), an accomplished scribe of Bavaria, copied Augustine's *Confessiones*, among many other volumes, for her monastic community, which, like Sempringham, included both nuns and monks.⁸ Judging from this scant evidence, then, Eve's potential reading of the *Confessiones* was, though not entirely unparalleled, at least something of a rarity in the late eleventh century. Yet the way in which and reason for which Goscelin indicates that Eve should read Augustine's *Confessiones* are not.

In fact, Goscelin's advice recalls, for one, Augustine's own readerly comments on his *Confessiones* as expressed in the later *Retractationes* – comments attached (in one form or another) as a prologue to every extant English copy of the *Confessiones* dating to the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁹ For Augustine opens his *Retractatio* in the following manner:

The thirteen books of my confessions concerning both my evils and goods praise the just and good God, and into him excite the human intellect and affection. At least, as far as I am concerned, they accomplished this in me when they were written and they do when they are read.¹⁰

⁸ On Diemud and the early sixteenth-century list which includes the *Confessiones* among the many books she copied, see: G.H. PUTNAM, *Books and Their Makers During the Middle Ages. 1. 476-1600* (New York and London, 1896), pp. 79-81, who prints the list and the following commendation (p. 80): "This virgin was most skilful in the art of writing: for though she is not known to have composed any work, yet she wrote with her own hand many volumes in a most beautiful and legible character, both for divine service and for the public library of the monastery". See also: J.M. FERRANTE, "The education of women in the middle ages in theory, fact and fantasy", in: *Beyond their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*, ed. P.H. LABALME (New York and London, 1980), p. 16. A. WEYL CARR, "Women artists in the middle ages", *The Feminist Art Journal* 5, 1 (1976), pp. 6-7.

⁹ There are only two extant medieval English manuscripts of the *Confessiones* which do not include some form of the appropriate *retractatio*, and these are both fourteenth-century copies: Durham Cathedral MS B.II.12 and Oxford, St John's College MS 206. On all the surviving English manuscripts of the *Confessiones*, see: OLSON, *Textual Construction*, III, Appendix A, pp. 1-15. IDEM, "Grandisson's fashioning", Appendix B, pp. 251-257.

¹⁰ Augustine, *Retractationes*, ed. A. MUTZENBECHER, *Sancti Augustini: Retractationum Libri II* (Turnhout, 1984: *Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina* 57), II, c. 6, ll. 2-5: "Confessionum mearum libri tredecim et de malis et de bonis meis deum laudant iustum et bonum, atque in eum excitant humanum intellectum et affectum. Interim quod ad me attinet, hoc in me egerunt cum scriberentur et agunt cum leguntur." This complete *retractatio* then continues with more detailed comments on the text's reception, structure and arguments, but in an abbreviated version of the *retractatio* which circulated in many English copies of the *Confessiones*, it is this concern of Augustine's with the reader's mental and emotional response to the text which is retained. See: OLSON, *Textual Construction*, I, p. 22, for this abbreviated text, which is also transcribed in: *S. Aureli Augustini Confessionum libri XIII*, ed. M. SKUTELLA,

Although Goscelin eliminates the “intellect” from Augustine’s formula, focusing solely upon the “affection” excited by Augustine’s text and the especially internal nature of that response, I do not believe that he does this because he is writing for a woman, as we might expect given modern discussions of how medieval people considered women more subject to the passions than men, and thus better suited to ‘affective’ forms of piety.¹¹ Rather, Goscelin appears to be manifesting the way in which monastic men of the eleventh and twelfth century thought about the *Confessiones* and their reception.¹² Adam of Dryburgh, for instance, writing in the second half of the twelfth century for his fellow Premonstratensian canons, describes the confessional ‘mode’ which he adopted from Augustine’s *Confessiones* for his *De triplici genere contemplationis* as a particularly effective mode for exciting the “affection” of his readers:

We composed that [book] by addressing God through confession, because, as it seems to certain [people], that mode of speaking is accustomed to excite greatly the affection of [those] reading.¹³

Though somewhat later, the gloss of an anonymous Cistercian scribe at the opening of a copy of William of St Thierry’s *De contemplando Deo* expresses a similar sentiment, for it claims that the confessional speech to God used by Augustine and those, like William, who emulate him moves the reader’s ‘affective’ faculty – the “will” – into the “love of God”:

corrected by H. JUERGENS and W. SCHAUB (Stuttgart, 1969), p. xii.

¹¹ See, for instance: E. ROBERTSON, *Early English Devotional Prose and the Female Audience* (Knoxville, 1990), especially p. 11 and p. 35.

¹² In addition, Augustine himself singles out “affection” alone when speaking of the purpose of his *Confessiones* in a passage of Book XI which recalls the claims of the *retractatio* and suggests Augustine’s desire to have his readers confess along with him. Augustine, *Confessiones*, ed. L. VERHEIJEN (Turnhout, 1981: *Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina* 27), XI, c. 1, ll. 2-5: “Cur ergo tibi tot rerum narrationes digero? Non utique ut per me noueris ea, sed affectum meum excito in te et eorum, qui haec legunt, ut dicamus omnes: magnus dominus et laudabilis ualde”.

¹³ Adam of Dryburgh, *Ad viros vitae venerabilis canonicos ecclesiae praemonstratensis*, ed. MIGNE, PL 198 (Paris, 1855), col. 796A: “Quem idcirco per confessionem Dominum alloquendo composuimus; quia iste, ut quibusdam videtur, dicendi modus legentium multum excitare solet affectum”. The letter in which this passage occurs explains both the *De triplici genere contemplationis* and the *De tripartito tabernaculo*. For a discussion of Adam’s use of Augustine’s devotional *confessio* mode, see: OLSON, *Textual Construction*, I, pp. 26-31. For his use of other aspects of the *Confessiones*, see: *Ibidem*, I, pp. 140-157, and II, pp. 118-121.

Augustine in the book of *Confessiones* first used this kind of speaking, and then Anselm of Canterbury in a certain little work which he named the *Proslogion*, [and] last that abbot writing this little book for exciting the wills of [those] reading into the love of God.¹⁴

The words of both Adam and this anonymous scribe, who explicitly claims that Augustine was the first to use such confessional speech, indicate that Goscelin's advice to Eve about reading the *Confessiones* so that "divine affection" might be poured into her "more deeply" is in keeping (though with an interesting twist to which I will return below) with the perspective and reception of learned religious men of the period – men for whom Augustine's *Confessiones* were a devotional text, and the devotion they promoted was a particularly internal and emotional activity with an inherently oral quality, specifically an affective "kind of speaking".¹⁵

It would seem, then, that Goscelin expected Eve to read the *Confessiones* in much the same way as the learned monastic men of his time read them, and this raises the vital question of whether Eve could have read such an intellectually demanding Latin text. The answer appears to be yes, and for a number of reasons. For one, as Bella Millett has pointed out,

Goscelin expects Eve to cope with his own fairly difficult Latin, and to understand his allusions to classical literature, as well as following a demanding programme of Latin reading: not only the Scriptures, but the Scriptural commentaries of Jerome, Augustine, Gregory and others, the lives of the Fathers, Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, Augustine's *Confessions* and *City of God*, Orosius's *History of the World*, and Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*.¹⁶

¹⁴ "Hoc genere loquendi primus usus est Augustinus in libro *Confessionum*, dehinc Anselmus Cantuariensis in opusculo quodam quod *Proslogion* nominavit, postremo abbas iste hunc scribens libellum ad excitandas legentium uoluntates in amorem Dei". The annotation appears on fol. 78r of Bruxellensis MS II.1058, a collection of spiritual and biblical texts from the Cistercian house at Aulne. It has been cited here from: P. COURCELLE, *Les Confessions de Saint Augustin dans la tradition littéraire: antécédents et postérité* (Paris, 1963), p. 289, n. 2. Although this manuscript has been dated to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (see: J. VAN DEN GHEYN, *Catalogue des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque royale de Belgique. II. Patrologiae* (Bruxelles, 1902), pp. 354-355), the comments of the Cistercian scribe are strikingly similar to those of Adam, and are useful here in retrieving a medieval monastic perspective of Augustine's *Confessiones*. The gloss is discussed in greater detail in: OLSON, *Textual Construction*, I, pp. 30-31.

¹⁵ For a lengthy discussion of the reception and use of Augustine's devotional *confessio* mode among the male monastic readers of late-eleventh and twelfth-century England, see: OLSON, *Textual Construction*, particularly I.

¹⁶ B. MILLETT, "Women in No Man's Land: English recluses and the development of vernacular literature in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries", in: *Women and Literature in Britain*

It is a programme which includes some of the most learned Latin texts available in her time – a textual diet similar to that which sustained the abbess, author and visionary, Hildegard of Bingen, in the twelfth century¹⁷ – and Eve is expected to read in a thoughtful and ethical fashion, gaining not only “divine affection” from her readings, but also “applying [her] heart to the understanding of the scriptures”, and learning from her textual experiences how “nothing [is] more miserable than the whirlpool of the world, nothing more felicitous than the peace of Christ”.¹⁸ As a woman who, even while living at Wilton, was reputed to have “practised strict asceticism”¹⁹ and who eventually sought a more rigorous spiritual life than the Benedictine cloister could offer, Eve would certainly have aimed to read in the personally penetrating and spiritually self-improving fashion Goscelin recommends. And as a member both of the nobility and (from childhood) of a pre-Conquest royal convent known for educating noble women and, by the twelfth century, for harbouring literary women,²⁰ Eve would have had the best possible chance of being fully *litterata*, that is, both literate and learned in the Latin language and its literature. It is even possible that Eve could have received some of her instruction in Latin

1150-1500, ed. C. MEALE (second edition; Cambridge, 1996), p. 88.

¹⁷ As K. Kerby-Fulton has kindly pointed out to me.

¹⁸ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, III, p. 80, l. 28: “pone cor tuum ad intelligentiam scripturarum”; and p. 81, ll. 3-4: “intelliges nil miserabilius seculi gurgite, nil felicius Christi pace”.

¹⁹ Or so Hilary claims in his poem written c.1125 in honour of the recluse Eve. See: ELKINS, *Holy Women*, p. 26. WILMART, “Ève et Goscelin I”, pp. 414-431.

²⁰ In the late eleventh century, for instance, Wilton housed and educated Matilda, the learned future Queen of Henry I who wrote letters in correct and careful Latin to Archbishop Anselm, including one in which she acknowledges rereading and memorizing his letters with pleasure, praises both their style and sense, and compares these to admirable qualities in the writing of Fronto, Cicero, Fabius, Quintilian, Paul, Jerome, Gregory and Augustine, apparently with some immediate knowledge of their texts. MIGNE, *PL* 159 (1903), *Epistola* 119, col. 156A-C. Both in this letter, where Matilda writes of her “heart” and “body” exulting in “affection” due to Anselm’s writing (col. 156B: “Hac igitur mihi gratia diffusa a labiis vestris cor meum et caro mea exsultaverunt in affectum vestrae dilectionis”), and in *Epistola* 96, where she speaks of the way in which both her mind and heart are involved in reading and rereading Anselm’s letters (cols. 134C-136A: “verba de dulci bonitatis vestrae fonte manantia ore relego, mente retracto, corde recogito, recogitata in ipso cordis arcano repono”), there is the sense that Matilda reads Anselm’s writing in much the same self-reflective and internalizing way as Goscelin would have Eve read his *Liber* and the texts he recommends. Wilton was also the home of the nun Muriel who, along with some of her sisters, had an international reputation for writing poetry in the early twelfth century. See the discussion in: ELKINS, *Holy Women*, pp. 10-13, where Wilton is described as a “literary centre where Muriel and other nuns wrote and recited verses that they exchanged with other monastic poets” (p. 11).

from Goscelin himself, who has been heralded as "one of the most widely-read men of his times".²¹ For Goscelin was not only chaplain to the nuns of Wilton when Eve was a child there, but also a friend of Eve's parents, and it would seem that he took on the responsibility of being Eve's spiritual guide almost immediately after her arrival at Wilton.²² That their relationship had an especially textual slant to it is clear in the record of their past interaction in the *Liber confortatorius*, where Goscelin claims that Eve lent him "the books [he] wanted"²³ and indicates that they have exchanged letters with each other prior to the composition of the *Liber*.²⁴ It would seem, then, that Eve possessed books of her own, could read and write, and was almost certainly among the most learned and devout women of her time, so it is highly likely that she could have read the *Confessiones* and read them with both grammatical precision and sincere piety.²⁵

²¹ BARLOW, *Life of King Edward*, p. 105, n. 1.

²² Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, I, pp. 28-29, describes how he provided Eve with symbolic interpretations of events when a new stone church was dedicated at Wilton shortly after Eve's reception in the Wilton convent. He also relates how Eve had once dreamed that she was "fed" by Goscelin "with the whitest bread before our spirit" ("*Recolisne quod ne a me cibatum pane candidissimo ante nostrum spiritum somniaueras*"; I, p. 29, ll. 13-14), a visionary acknowledgement of Goscelin as the provider of her spiritual nutrition which coincides nicely with Goscelin's metaphor in the *Liber* of the texts he recommends as food for the Christian soul developing in seclusion.

²³ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, I, p. 28, ll. 4-5: "*Libros optatos dedisti*". The passage could, however, suggest that Eve, as a child in the convent, simply brought to Goscelin the books he had requested, but BARLOW, *Life of King Edward*, p. 98, interprets the passage as indicating that she lent him her own books. Even if this is not the case, however, Goscelin's passage clearly places Eve, books and himself together in a context of instruction and friendship.

²⁴ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, I, p. 29, ll. 5-6: "*Afferebant tibi Christum frequentes membrane et scedule nostre, nec tue uocabant castissime littere*". The exchange of letters between learned religious men and women was not uncommon in Europe in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, with Abelard and Heloise being the best known of many examples. See: J.T. MUCKLE, "The personal letters between Abelard and Heloise", *Mediaeval Studies* 15 (1953), pp. 47-94. IDEM, "The letter of Heloise on religious life and Abelard's first reply", *Mediaeval Studies* 17 (1955), pp. 240-281. Indeed, Abelard even claims that, since Heloise was learned, he believed she would be able to communicate with him on an intimate level through written messages, and that this was among the incentives for choosing her as a lover. IDEM, "Abelard's letter of consolation to a friend [*Historia Calamitatum*]", *Mediaeval Studies* 12 (1950), pp. 163-213, p. 183: "*nosque etiam absentes scriptis internuntiis invicem liceret praesentare, et pleraque audacius scribere quam colloqui, et sic semper iocundis interesse colloquiis*".

²⁵ Eve's learning could, in fact, have been one of aspects of her character which especially attracted the learned Goscelin, much as Abelard reveals that Heloise's "literary knowledge" (*litteratoria scientia*), so rare in a woman, not only won her renown, but also rendered her particularly agreeable to him, both as a present lover and as an absent epistolary companion. See:

Whether or not she actually did read that text, however, remains a mystery, since we have no evidence beyond Goscelin's comments to link Eve to the *Confessiones*. Yet certain aspects of Goscelin's *Liber* do suggest that Eve was either familiar with the autobiography, or would be once she had read and reflected upon Goscelin's work and advice for her. For Goscelin uses the *Confessiones* himself in his *Liber* in such a way that he presents Eve with examples of the patterns he hoped she might find more fully articulated in the *Confessiones* themselves.²⁶ He adopts, for instance, Augustine's autobiographical mode of confessing to God as a devotional model for the prayers which so frequently punctuate the text of the *Liber* – prayers in which words and phrases familiar from the *Confessiones* echo, while an urgent emotional tone much like Augustine's dominates. In addition, Goscelin's description of what we might call his devotional anguish at the loss of Eve (for it is in response to her unexpected and unannounced departure to the continent that Goscelin writes the long letter which is his *Liber*) recalls Augustine's similar devotional turmoil in the Milanese garden of his conversion. For Goscelin "fell to the ground" in a "more remote church" just as Augustine had removed himself "more remotely"²⁷ from Alypius and "thrown himself down" under a fig tree²⁸. Goscelin experiences the "blows and lashes of the Lord" just as Augustine had felt within himself the "lashes" of his conscience²⁹ and the "whips" of the Lord.³⁰ Goscelin cries out in a "deluge of tears" just as Augustine had wept a "monstrous shower of tears"³¹ and released the "streams of his eyes".³² Goscelin even adopts the same immediate present-tense voice used by Augustine in his garden conversion scene – "And behold, I hear a voice..."³³ – by starting his passage with "But behold, while I write..."³⁴ Having thus established himself

MUCKLE, "Abelard's letter", p. 183.

²⁶ This is assuming, of course, that Eve at least read the work Goscelin wrote for her, though were she a man, we would not doubt that she had. For a more detailed discussion of Goscelin's use of the *Confessiones*, their "mode of speaking" and their pattern of *conversio* in his *Liber*, see: OLSON, *Textual Construction*, I, pp. 101-105, and II, pp. 124-131.

²⁷ Augustine, *Confessiones*, VIII, c. 12, l. 5: "*remotius*".

²⁸ Augustine, *Confessiones*, VIII, c. 12, ll. 9-10: "*Ego sub quadam fici arbore strauī me*".

²⁹ Augustine, *Confessiones*, VIII, c. 7, l. 38: *uerbera*.

³⁰ Augustine, *Confessiones*, VIII, c. 11, l. 5: "*flagella*".

³¹ Augustine, *Confessiones*, VIII, c. 12, l. 3: *ingens imber lacrimarum*.

³² Augustine, *Confessiones*, VIII, c. 12, l. 11: "*flumina oculorum meorum*".

³³ Augustine, *Confessiones*, VIII, c. 12, l. 19: "*Et ecce audio uocem ...*".

³⁴ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, I, p. 27, ll. 22-26: "*Sed ecce, dum scribo, grassans dolor non potuit dissimulari; cecidere manus et usus scriptorii; rugitus et eiulatus inuasit me; corruī coram altari tui Laurentii, ut sedebam in eius ecclesia remotiori, clamabam frequens in diluuiō*

within the Augustinian tradition of internal turmoil and affective devotion found in the *Confessiones*, and implying in the process that Eve's departure has triggered an emotional struggle and perhaps even a spiritual conversion similar to that experienced by Augustine, Goscelin recommends a similar, if less turbulent, kind of devotion for Eve. It is a devotion which originates within and bristles with "affection", much like Augustine's *confessio*:

In a spirit of humility, I say, and in a contrite spirit serving the Lord in fear, and leaping up to him with trembling, pour out your heart with whole-hearted sighs of desires to be saved in your God, with all [your] innermost parts eagerly desire him, absorb him, embrace him.³⁵

Thus Goscelin both exemplifies and prescribes for Eve the emotional methods of devotion and self-examination which he appears to have found in the *Confessiones*, attempting through his use of that autobiography to encourage in her the devotional "affection" he believes the *Confessiones* themselves instill.

But this is not the only kind of "affection" which Goscelin's *Liber* attempts to pour into its audience of one, as an examination of Goscelin's first mention of Augustine's autobiography indicates.³⁶ As with his later reference to the *Confessiones*, Goscelin here calls upon Augustine's text for devotional reasons, though this time he is discussing Monnica's prayers for her son. As Goscelin explains, "Augustine declares in the book of *Confessiones* that he was pardoned for the tears of his mother", who devoutly pleads and weeps for her son's conversion and salvation with the ultimate result that he is delivered from "heresy", from the "Charybdis" or whirlpool "of lust" and from "all the entice-

lacrimarum quasi inter ictus et uerbera Domini: Domine miserere, Domine miserere". Goscelin's use of the word "ictus", translated here as "blows", provides an excellent example of the way, simultaneously rich and subtle, in which he adopts suggestive terms from Augustine's language of changeable interiority, for "ictus" is used in the *Confessiones* to describe sudden moments of vision or clarity concerning both God and the self (see, for instance: Augustine, *Confessiones*, VII, c. 1, l. 16 and c. 17, l. 27, and IX, c. 8, l. 52 and c. 10, l. 28), and Goscelin's use of it thus hints at the revelatory, as well as the grievous, nature of the "blows" he suffers.

³⁵ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, IV, p. 106, ll. 31-34: "*In spiritu, inquam, humilitatis et in animo contrito seruiens Domino in timore, et exultans ei cum tremore, totis desideriorum suspiriis cor tuum in Deo salutari tuo effunde, totis uisceribus illum concupisce, illum concipe, illum amplectere*".

³⁶ Goscelin's readerly advice in Book III of the *Liber confortatorius* is actually his second mention of the *Confessiones*, and this double naming of Augustine's autobiography is remarkable among the authors of eleventh and twelfth-century England.

ments of the world".³⁷ Goscelin then makes it clear that his intention is to have Eve pray for him as Monnica prayed for her son:

The foresaid mother gained a son for God; with the same piety a daughter may gain a father. You may pray for this one [thing] with affectionate tears: that the kindness of the redeemer may make me his own, that he may convert me to himself in my whole heart, that he may give the heart and the place of serving him in peace.³⁸

It is not Augustine who is the model for Eve here, as he was for Goscelin's lament, but his devout and loving mother, while Goscelin takes on the role of the sinning and converting Augustinian son. Besides paying a compliment to Eve's spirituality, quite possibly triggered by her decision to follow the spiritual rigours of the reclusive life, this arrangement engages Eve in an intimate spiritual relationship – a friendship based upon "divine affection" – which is, I believe, central to the intentions of Goscelin's "comforting book". For he asks her to pray for him, connecting the two of them across the miles in God's eyes, uniting them spiritually and internally in "the inseparable presence of the soul" which Goscelin claims is "present for" Eve in his *Liber*.³⁹ Recalling Augustine's famous claim that his soul and the soul of his young friend were "one soul in two bodies",⁴⁰ Goscelin hopes that the physical separation between Eve and himself will eventually result in God rebuilding "more inseparably at some time one soul of two".⁴¹

Goscelin thus calls upon Augustine's failed worldly friendship, which, when lost because of God's higher claim, makes Augustine's life a "horror"⁴² – its excessive intimacy and its aspirations to permanence under the necessity of mortality – to elevate and spiritualize his own relationship with Eve, also

³⁷ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, I, p. 33, ll. 14-15 and ll. 20-22: "Mille codicum artifex magnus Augustinus testatur in libro Confessionum ut matris lacrimis sit donatus....Non solum ab heresi quod solum materne preces flagitauerant emersit, uerum etiam a Caribdi libidinis et cunctis mundi illecebris splendidissima lucerna hominum emicuit".

³⁸ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, I, p. 34, ll. 1-4: "Predicta mater lucrata est Deo filium; eadem pietate lucretur filia patrem. Hoc unum ores affectuosis lacrimis, ut me suum efficiat benignitas redemptoris, ut in toto corde meo me conuertat ad se, ut det cor et locum seruiendi sibi in pace".

³⁹ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, I, p. 27, ll. 1-3: "O luce dilector anima, adest tibi Goscelinus tuus, inseparabili anime presentia; adest meliori parte, ea qua te diligere potuit, individua, qua nulla excludant terrarum interstitia; salutat te in Christo salute sempiterna".

⁴⁰ Augustine, *Confessiones*, IV, c. 6, ll. 23-24: una anima in duobus corporibus.

⁴¹ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, I, p. 27, ll. 6-8: "Quo autem longius corpore remouit, eo inseparabilius uncam aliquando duorum animam resolidabit".

⁴² Augustine, *Confessiones*, IV, c. 6, l. 24: "ideo mihi horrore erat uita".

lost, or at least altered, because of God's higher claim, and to convert through a textual medium their human friendship into a microcosm of the Christian community of apostles, with "one heart and soul".⁴³ No doubt that is why he expresses his grief over losing Eve in terms borrowed from Augustine's dramatic conversion (as cited earlier), suggesting that his physical separation from her is similar to Augustine's loss of the "old friends" of *cupiditas*,⁴⁴ while this new textual and devotional relationship with her will constitute a conversion into *caritas*. And no doubt that is also why the image of the whirlpool, Augustine's Christianized classical metaphor for the distracting, almost irresistible *cupiditas* of the world which traps him for so many years in the *Confessiones*,⁴⁵ appears, first as *Carybdis* and then as *gurgēs*, along with both mentions of the *Confessiones* – specifically along with Goscelin's use of the *Confessiones* to establish through reading text and uttering prayer a "divine" Christian relationship with Eve, to share with her a "divine affection" which, like that she is to share with God, might well be inspired by the *Confessiones*, particularly when read in conjunction with Goscelin's *Liber*. Using the whirlpool image as a clue of sorts to his literary conversion of the human love between Eve and himself into a divine *caritas*, Goscelin elevates his relationship with Eve beyond the spiritual friendship between Augustine and Monnica reported in the *Confessiones* and into the confessional intimacy which Augustine shares with God alone in his autobiography. Thus Goscelin frequently calls upon Eve in ways similar to those which Augustine uses in the *Confessiones* when speaking to his God and his own inner faculties: "O child most sweet to my soul", "my soul", "my sweetest soul", and "O sweetest soul".⁴⁶ So Goscelin's soul, the part of him which is particularly 'present' in his text (as noted above), speaks directly to Eve's soul, revealing that she is essential to, intertwined with and even a part of his soul, perhaps at times even implying that she *is* his soul, the force moti-

⁴³ Acts 4, 32: "*cor et anima una*". The quotation has been drawn from the *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem* (Stuttgart, 1969).

⁴⁴ Augustine, *Confessiones*, VIII, c. 11, ll. 18-19: "*antiquae amicae*".

⁴⁵ See, for instance, the "whirlpool of shameful crimes" (*gurgēs flagitiorum*, *Confessiones*, II, c. 2, l. 8) in which Augustine is immersed in adolescence, and the "whirlpool of carnal pleasures" (*uoluptatum carnalium gurgēs*, *Confessiones*, VI, c. 16, l. 4) from which Augustine attempts to extract himself in his struggle for conversion. The Augustinian whirlpool of worldly cupidity (*gurgēs cupiditatis*) is a recurrent and suggestive image in the writings of the eleventh and twelfth-century male English readers of the *Confessiones* studied in: OLSON, *Textual Construction*.

⁴⁶ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, IV, p. 103, ll. 17-18: "*O pignus anime mee dulcissimum*"; I, p. 39, l. 2, and p. 40, l. 35: "*anima mi*"; I, p. 28, l. 2: "*anima mi dulcissima*"; and IV, p. 106, l. 10: "*O dulcissima anima*".

vating his life and affections, his hopes and dreams. In this way, Eve is placed in the position occupied in the *Confessiones* by the God who is the true “life of the soul”,⁴⁷ and Augustine’s opening invocation of God in the *Confessiones* – “*Magnus es, domine...*” (“You are great, Lord”)⁴⁸ – is replaced with the intimate invocation of Eve which assigns her an emotional value above the light commonly associated with God and his divine wisdom: “O soul more beloved than light”.⁴⁹

Certainly Goscelin’s is a sophisticated intertextual manipulation of the themes and events of Augustine’s *Confessiones* and one which would have been wasted in a text written solely for Eve if she had not been familiar with the *Confessiones* and read both them and Goscelin’s *Liber* in highly literate and self-reflective ways.⁵⁰ It is probable, then, that Goscelin’s notion of the *Confessiones* pouring divine affection into Eve rather than exciting it within her, as the subtly different comments of Augustine, Adam and our anonymous Cistercian scribe would have it, is due to the fact that she would need to receive information – have Augustine’s language, images and events “poured into” her – rather than simply inspiration from that autobiography in order to understand exactly what Goscelin intends, manifest her own devotion and loss and grief in the manner Goscelin suggests and thus complete the conversion of their friendship into the ideal relationship of “divine affection” which Goscelin works so hard to construct in his *Liber*.

Eve’s potential and potentially sophisticated familiarity with Augustine’s autobiography is supported by a second text of this period in which a male author makes use of the *Confessiones* and specifically addresses English women. Again, the text is a Latin work of spiritual guidance for an enclosed religious woman, for the *De institutione inclusarum* written by the Cistercian abbot Aelred of Rievaulx in the early 1160s for his unnamed “sister” aimed to provide her with a long-requested “formula” for her “customs” and “practices” in the reclusive life.⁵¹ It is possible that Aelred’s sister was, like Eve nearly a

⁴⁷ Augustine, *Confessiones*, III, c. 6, l. 42: *uita animarum*.

⁴⁸ Augustine, *Confessiones*, I, c. 1, l. 1.

⁴⁹ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, I, p. 27, l. 1: “O luce dilector anima”.

⁵⁰ In his *Prologus*, Goscelin emphasizes how his “pilgrim letter” is intended for Eve “alone”, and that anyone else to whom it might wander should return it to her. Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, Prologus, p. 26, ll. 9-12: “Si forte in alienas manus oberrauerit hec peregrina epistola incertis uentis dimissa, sed Deo commendata, precamur ut ei reddatur cui soli constat destinata, nec praeipiat quisquam non sibi parata”.

⁵¹ Aelred, *De institutione inclusarum*, ed. C.H. TALBOT, *Aelredi Rievallensis opera omnia*

century earlier, a nun before becoming a recluse,⁵² and though we do not know where, she could thus have received instruction in Latin grammar in the cloister. In any case, her literacy at some level is certain, for Aelred describes her in the *De institutione*, as being “educated”, along with himself, by their parents, and refers to times when she was “reading” and doing so in such a way that she was enlightened “with the light of spiritual senses”.⁵³ In addition, like Eve, Aelred’s sister is expected by the author to cope with the Latin of the text he writes for her, as well as with a programme of private reading which, while not so obviously demanding as that recommended for Eve, includes other Latin texts, like the lives, rules and miracles of the fathers, which are noted as inspiring “compunction”, “fervour of spirit” and a “heart full of devotion”.⁵⁴ Thus we can assume that Aelred’s sister was capable of reading the *Confessiones* in Latin, quite possibly in a self-reflective and devotional way, and perhaps even at a sophisticated literary and critical level similar to that I have attributed to Eve, and while we ultimately cannot know whether she did or not, it would be folly to presume that she did not read, and read carefully, the requested text in which Aelred (as we shall see) so richly engages that autobiography.

(Turnhout, 1971: *Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis* 1), pp. 637-682, 1, ll. 4-7: “*Iam pluribus annis exigo a me, soror, ut secundum modum uiuendi quem arripuisti pro Christo, certam tibi formulam tradam, ad quam et mores tuos dirigere et necessaria religioni possis exercitia ordinare*”. Although M. DUTTON, “The conversion and vocation of Aelred of Rievaulx: a historical hypothesis”, in: *England in the Twelfth Century: Proceedings of the 1988 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. D. WILLIAMS (Woodbridge, 1990), pp. 31-49, p. 32, n. 3, points out that Aelred may have invented this sister “to justify his writing a work of direction for a woman”, this neither negates the fact that the text was written for a female audience nor accounts for the autobiographical passage of the text in which Aelred speaks of their shared childhood (Section 32). Aelred’s biographer, Walter Daniel, also claims that Aelred wrote the *De institutione* for the “most chaste virgin” and “recluse” who was his “sister” (“*unum librum scripsit sorori sue incluse castissime uirgini*”). Walter Daniel, *Vita Ailredi abbatis Rievallensis: The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, ed. and trans. F.M. POWICKE (London, 1950), c. 32, p. 41. On the date of the *De institutione*, see: POWICKE, *Life of Ailred*, p. xcvi. A. SQUIRE, *Aelred of Rievaulx: A Study* (London, 1981), pp. 118-119.

⁵² A.K. WARREN, “The nun as anchoress: England 1100-1500”, in: *Distant Echoes: Medieval Religious Women I*, ed. J.A. NICHOLS and L.T. SHANK (Kalamazoo, 1984), pp. 197-212, p. 202. MILLETT, “No Man’s Land”, p. 88, n. 16.

⁵³ Aelred, *De institutione*, 32, ll. 1260-1261: “*educati a parentibus*”. *Ibidem*, 32, ll. 1349-1350: “*Quotiens psallentem uel legentem spiritualium sensuum lumine illustrabat*”.

⁵⁴ Aelred, *De institutione*, 9, ll. 293-297: “*Facto autem paruo interuallo aliquam lectionem de Vitis Patrum, uel Institutis, uel miraculis eorum sibi secretius legat, ut orta ex his aliqua compunctione, in quodam feruore spiritus completorium dicat, et cum pectore pleno deuotionis, lectulo membra componat*”.

Textual proficiency was not the case, however, with all of the women whom Aelred aims to address in his *De institutione*, for he also writes for the “younger women”, who, on his sister’s “counsel, long to seize a similar life”, and he assumes that some of them will not be literate, or more precisely, will “not understand letters”, implying that they would be unlearned at least in Latin and its literature.⁵⁵ While it is possible that these women could have had texts like the *Confessiones* and Aelred’s *De institutione* read aloud or explained to them in English, and indeed, that Aelred’s sister, as their spiritual inspiration and guide, might have taken part in educating them through such texts,⁵⁶ it is unlikely that all of Aelred’s intended audience would have been able to recognize and understand the sophisticated intertextual ways in which Aelred, like Goscelin, made use of the *Confessiones*. No doubt the potential illiteracy of some of those for whom his *De institutione* was written is part of the reason why Aelred emphasizes a programme of meditation which need not necessarily include reading, specifically a “triple meditation of things past, present and future” designed, like the *Confessiones* themselves, to “excite” an “affection” manifested in both “desire” and “tears”.⁵⁷ While the meditation of past matters focuses on the life and passion of Christ, and that of future events projects his second coming and final judgement, both based upon biblical stories and theological commonplaces familiar and necessary even to illiterate Christians, it is the meditation of present things within one’s own personal “experience” which is of particular interest here.⁵⁸ For it is in this section of his text that Aelred calls extensively upon the *Confessiones* to present a passage of reflective autobiography, weave it together with a brief biography of his sister,

⁵⁵ Aelred, *De institutione*, 7, ll. 177-179: “Non solum propter te, sed etiam propter adolescentiores quae similem uitam tuo consilio arripere gestiunt, hanc tibi formulam scribi uoluisti”. *Ibidem*, 9, ll. 298-304, where Aelred discusses the manual labour and prayers of recluses who cannot “understand letters”, l. 298: “Illa sane quae litteras non intelligit”.

⁵⁶ ELKINS, *Holy Women*, p. 41, notes how her discussion of the eremitic life in late-eleventh and early twelfth century England reveals women recluses not only receiving spiritual guidance from men, but also giving similar guidance to both men and women. The existence of two later Middle English translations of Aelred’s *De institutione inclusarum* (dating to the late fourteenth and mid fifteenth centuries) certainly implies that the text was used by English recluses who did not know Latin. See the texts in: Aelred of Rievaulx’s *De institutione inclusarum: Two English Versions*, ed. J. AYTO and A. BARRATT (London, New York and Toronto, 1984: EETS OS 287).

⁵⁷ Aelred, *De institutione*, 29, ll. 884-887: “Triplici meditatione opus habes, de praeteritis scilicet, praesentibus et futuris, id est de praeteritorum recordatione, de experientia praesentium, de consideratione futurorum”. *Ibidem*, 33, ll. 1523-1525: “Meditatio affectum excitet, affectus desiderium pariat, lacrymas desiderium excitet, ut sint tibi lacrymae tuae panes dies ac nocte”.

⁵⁸ Aelred, *De institutione*, 29, l. 886: “experientia praesentium”.

and place this text of personal "experience" on a par with – indeed, sandwich it between – biblical authority, making a meditative reading of oneself as important as a reading of the biblical text, a vital move for a potentially illiterate audience.⁵⁹ In analyzing and writing of himself in this context, Aelred narrates his loss of "chastity" in youth (*puditia*)⁶⁰ and his deplorable fascination with worldly pleasures in the imagistic language and confessional techniques he found in Augustine's similar self-revelations in the *Confessiones*. Thus a comparison of Augustine's description of his sinful youth with Aelred's report of his own adolescence in the *De institutione* reveals how both authors claim that "mists" of longing "were exhaled from a muddy concupiscence of flesh and a bubbling up of puberty". Both authors report a confusion between the positive affection of *caritas* and the endless longing of *cupiditas* which "snatched [their] weak age through the steep descents of vices, and immersed [them] in a whirlpool of shameful crimes". And both authors speak, in the direct voice of confession, of God's "anger" gathering strength over them without their knowledge, of moving "farther from God" as he allows it, of being "flung about and poured out" and flowing "in the different directions" determined by the whims of sin, while God remained uninvolved and "silent".⁶¹

⁵⁹ Reading oneself meditatively in order to improve oneself spiritually, and reading oneself particularly in relation to biblical texts, are also familiar in twelfth-century Cistercian texts written primarily for men. See, for instance, the opening of Bernard's third *Sermo super Cantica Canticorum*, where he demands a personally active and self-reflective reading of the biblical text he is discussing: "We read today in the book of experience. Convert to yourselves, and let each one attend to his conscience concerning those things which are to be said". (J. LECLERCQ, C.H. TALBOT and H.M. ROCHAIS, *S. Bernardi Opera* 1 (Rome, 1957), *Sermo* III.1.1, p. 14, ll. 7-9: "*Hodie legimus in libro experientiae. Convertimini ad vos ipsos, et attendat unusquisque conscientiam suam super his quae dicenda sunt*".) See also Aelred's words in the *De Iesu puero duodenni* he wrote for his Cistercian friend and spiritual son Ivo: "if by chance I may be able to explain your progress to you in the evangelical reading, so that you may read in these documents this itself, which you experience more sweetly in yourself from within" (ed. A. HOSTE, *Aelredi opera omnia*, III, 19, ll. 3-5: "*si forte sufficiam in euangelica lectione tuum tibi explicare profectum, ut hoc ipsum in his legas schedulis, quod in temetipso ab intus suavius experiris*"). For a discussion of Aelred's use of the *Confessiones* in his explication of reading the gospel texts in the *De Iesu puero duodenni*, see: OLSON, *Textual Construction*, II, pp. 108-117.

⁶⁰ Aelred, *De institutione*, 32, l. 1278.

⁶¹ Augustine, *Confessiones*, II, c. 2, ll. 3-14: "*Sed exhalabantur nebulae de limosa concupiscentia carnis et scatebra pubertatis et obnubilabant atque obfuscabant cor meum, ut non discerneretur serenitas dilectionis a caligine libidinis. Vtrumque in confuso aestuabat et rapiebat imbecillam aetatem per abrupta cupiditatum atque mersabat gurgite flagitiorum. Inualuerat super me ira tua, et nesciebam. Obsurdueram stridore catenae mortalitatis meae, poena superbiae animae meae, et ibam longius a te, et sinebas, et iactabar et effundebam et diffundebam et ebulliebam per fornicationes meas, et tacebas. O tardum gaudium meum! Tacebas*

Though only a small sample of Aelred's autobiographical use of the *Confessiones* even in Section 32 of the *De institutione*, these echoes demonstrate how Aelred is presenting the Augustinian pattern of textual self-construction as a sinner – self-construction, that is, through rigorous self-reflection and penitential confession – as an example for the female recluses for whom he writes. In so doing, he adopts Augustine's oral and affective mode of devout confession, he focuses upon his own concupiscent affection in youth, he uses graphic physical metaphors to express what occurred within himself because of this carnal longing, and he assumes the stance of the ever-changing and now converted ascetic self who has left the "whirlpool" of worldly sin behind. It may in fact be the case that he does this because he considered these approaches highly appropriate for the instruction of those whom his learned society, fostered on classical and patristic notions of women,⁶² tended to see as less rational and more emotional than men, and thus as mutable and carnal creatures mostly unworthy of the higher education and incapable of the sophisticated literacy which Goscelin assumes in Eve. Yet in adopting the techniques and language used by Augustine to confess devoutly to God and write the autobiography of his "feelings",⁶³ Aelred both appropriately and paradoxically passes a highly learned Latin tradition of devotion, meditation and spiritual progress – a learned tradition, that is, of textually constructing ascetic Christian interiority – along to a female and potentially unlearned audience, even indirectly to illiterate girls who may have had very little understanding of its origin, though certainly they could have spoken their own contrite confessions, and thus adopted Augustine's inherently oral *confessio*, the emotional "mode of

tunc, et ego ibam porro longe a te in plura et plura sterilia semina dolorum superba deiectione et inquieta lassitudine". Aelred, *De institutione*, 32, ll. 1290-1300: "*Recole nunc, ut dixi, corruptiones meas cum exhalaretur nebula libidinis ex limosa concupiscentia carnis et scatebra pubertatis, nec esset qui eriperet et saluum faceret. Verba enim iniquorum praeualuerunt super me, qui in suaui poculo amoris propinabant mihi uenenum luxuriae, conuenientesque in unum affectionis suauitas et cupiditatis impuritas rapiebant imbecillem adhuc aetatem meam per abrupta uitiorum atque mersabant gurgite flagitiorum. Inualuerat super me ira et indignatio tua, Deus, et nesciebam, ibam longius a te et sinebas, iactabar et effundebar, diffleuebam per immunditias meas, et tacebas*".

⁶² See, for instance, the collection of classical and medieval male-authored texts describing women and their behaviour in: *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts*, ed. A. BLAMIRE, K. PRATT and C.W. MARK (Oxford, 1992).

⁶³ I am thinking here of the definition of P. BROWN, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), p. 169: "The *Confessions* are, quite succinctly, the story of Augustine's 'heart', or of his 'feelings' – his *affectus*".

speaking" so well suited to an illiterate or semi-literate audience, both within their hearts and aloud before God.⁶⁴

Yet it is essential to notice that it is of himself (and not the women he addresses) that Aelred writes in the language of the sinner here, while his sister takes on a Monnica-like holiness, just as Eve had in Goscelin's *Liber*: God "divided between you and me", Aelred tells his sister, "as if between light and darkenesses, preserving you for himself, and abandoning me to myself".⁶⁵ There are, I imagine, many reasons why this spiritual elevation of the female might take place along with an engagement of the *Confessiones* in the work of both writers. No doubt authorial humility and self-depreciation played a part, as did perhaps a careful respect for the women recluses who, simply because female and therefore, in medieval terms, physically, morally and intellectually weaker,⁶⁶ might have been more readily viewed as immoral and incapable of withstanding temptation if known to have once been unchaste than would men in similar positions. The motivation might also have been practical and realistic, for Eve did choose to follow a higher spiritual calling as a solitary, whereas Goscelin remained in the communal life, and the situation is the same with Aelred's sister. Thus while Goscelin pays Eve the compliment of a superior faith, Aelred confirms the morality and spiritual authority of the sister who appears to have some didactic influence over younger aspirants to the reclusive

⁶⁴ Since the Latin Psalter was "in this period the first reader, even for children not intended for the church" (MILLETT, "No Man's Land", p. 89), even those with a very little amount of learning would have known the Psalms and thus been familiar with their devotional mode, and this in turn would have made Augustine's *Confessiones*, themselves profoundly influenced by and "studded with the language of the Psalms" (BROWN, *Biography*, p. 174), an especially appropriate and appealing text for the barely or marginally literate. The Psalms were also central, of course, to the monastic round of hours and offices associated with both the coenobitic and the eremitic lifestyles of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. See: ELKINS, *Holy Women*, p. 25, who notes how Goscelin, for instance, "thought Eve's new schedule" as a recluse "was much like her old one at Wilton, which followed the monastic hours with regular times for the psalter and sacred readings".

⁶⁵ Aelred, *De institutione*, 32, ll. 1268-1270: "*Diuisit enim inter te et me quasi inter lucem et tenebras, te sibi conseruans, me mihi relinquens*".

⁶⁶ The notion of women as the 'weaker' sex is a common one in the writings of both men and women throughout the Middle Ages, though in the works of women the stance of frailty often serves to give a special power and authority to their voices. Such is the case, for instance, with Hildegard of Bingen, who exploits her position as a "poor little feminine form" ("*ego paupercula feminea forma*") to sway popes and kings, often using her supposed female weakness as evidence of the fact that her powerful speech must necessarily have originated with God. The quotation has been drawn from Hildegard's first letter to Guibert of Gembloux as quoted in: P. DRONKE, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua* († 203) to Marguerite Porete († 1310) (Cambridge, London and New York, 1984), p. 251.

life, and who may well have been living chastely in a convent while Aelred enjoyed the dubious pleasures of the Scottish court. In any case, the tendency to depict the female recluses for whom they write in the holier guise of Monnica rather than in the sinful garb of Augustine suggests that the *Confessiones* provided this model, too, for the construction of devout spirituality – a model especially suited by gender to women, and particularly to religious women with learned male companions, though one (it is worth noting) which does not confirm the apparently common view of women as more sinful than men.

Although the model of Monnica presented to Eve and Aelred's sister was not (to my knowledge) used personally by English men of this period, its use certainly does not prevent Goscelin and Aelred from expecting the women for whom they write to make use of the *Confessiones* in ways reminiscent of their own and other contemporary male uses of that autobiography. Goscelin not only recommends that Eve read the text to inspire the "divine affection" in herself which he manifests in his own prayers to God, but also expects her to understand and unravel the sophisticated intertextual engagement of the *Confessiones* through which he constructs their shared spiritual "affection". And Aelred first carefully distinguishes between the spirituality of his sister and himself, noting how she "exults" in the "riches" of grace while he labours to "repair the broken, recover the lost and mend the torn", and then advises the following:

Yet in truth I also want you to emulate me, and you may consider that you should blush a great deal if, after so many shameful crimes, I were to be found equal to you in that [spiritual] life, when certain intervening vices may often diminish the glory of virginity, and a change of customs and virtues succeeding vices might obliterate the disgrace of old behaviour.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Aelred, *De institutione*, 32, ll. 1329-1337: "Tu ergo in his quas tibi diuina gratia conseruauit, exultas diuitiis: mihi maximus labor incumbit ut fracta redintegrem, amissa recuperem, scissa resarciam. // Verumtamen et me uolo aemuleris, ualdeque putes erubescendum, si post tot flagitia, in illa uita tibi fuero inuentus aequalis, cum saepe uirginitatis gloriam interuenientia quaedam uitia minuant, et ueteris conuersationis opprobrium morum mutatio et succedentes uitiiis uirtutes obliterent". I have emended the *Corpus Christianorum* reading of "nolo" to the variant "uolo", which, in my opinion, makes better sense. M.P. Macpherson's translation, "Yet in this respect I would have you emulate me", found on p. 95 of *Aelred of Rievaulx: Treatises: The Pastoral Prayer*, trans. T. BERKELEY, M.P. MACPHERSON and R.P. LAWSON (Kalamazoo, 1971), published in the same year as the *Corpus Christianorum* volume, would appear to be in agreement with this emendation.

In this way, the self-reflection and confession of the Augustinian sinner is an effective (as well as an 'affective') example of personal meditation even for the most chaste and holy of individuals, like Aelred's sister. Indeed, her daily progression in the spiritual life is contingent upon her recognition of and grief over her sinful nature, as Aelred points out when he advises her "to turn over in spirit" how she has "lived" each day, asking herself whether she "offended" God "by word, by deed or by affection", and, if the answer is affirmative, to "sigh" and "beat [her] breast" so that she may "sleep ... reconciled" to God through "this evening sacrifice" of confession.⁶⁸ Each day, then, in the life of the female recluses for whom Aelred writes, should be a stage in the long internal journey of return to God through critical self-reflection and the "sacrifice" of emotional confession which is narrated as autobiography in the *Confessiones*. Indeed, given that the goal of both male and female recluses was "to control the inner life, based on extensive self-scrutiny and self-knowledge",⁶⁹ and ultimately to progress through asceticism, self-knowledge, meditation and devotion to a final union with the Christian God, it should come as little surprise that Augustine's *Confessiones* would be considered by the monastic men who used them to fashion their own developing spiritual interiorities as a perfect text for the use of those women whose religious choices forced them to focus upon themselves alone.

Reclusive women, however, were not the only female recipients of the Augustinian confessional writings produced by the monastic men of England in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. For Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury made extensive use of the *Confessiones* in his *Orationes sive meditationes*, the majority of which were written prior to the *Proslogion* mentioned by our anonymous Cistercian scribe,⁷⁰ and he then presented these devotional pieces to at

⁶⁸ Aelred, *De institutione*, 16, ll. 512-519: "Prostrata lectulo pudicitiam tuam commenda Deo, et sic signo crucis armata, reuolue animo quomodo die illo uixisti, si uerbo, si opere, si affectu, Domini tui oculos offendisti, si leuior, si otiosior, si negligentior debito fuisti, si plusculo cibo crudior, si potu dissolutior, metas necessitatis excessisti. Si subreptum tibi aliquid horum deprehenderis, suspira, pectus tunde, et hoc sacrificio uespertino, tuo reconciliatam sponso, somnus excipiat". The idea of prayer or confession as a sacrifice is common in the *Confessiones*: see, for instance, the plea that God "accept the sacrifice" of Augustine's "confessions" at the opening of Book V (V, c. 1, l. 1: "Accipe sacrificium confessionum mearum").

⁶⁹ ROBERTSON, *English Devotional Prose*, p. 24.

⁷⁰ While the majority of the *Orationes sive meditationes* were written in the years between 1070 and 1078, the *Proslogion* was not completed until c.1078. On the dates of these works, see: R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm and His Biographer: A Study of Monastic Life and Thought 1059-c.1130* (Cambridge, 1963), p. 34 and p. 36. IDEM, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*

least two European noblewomen, as well as to his monastic brothers. The most obvious and pervasive Augustinian feature of Anselm's personal devotions is the way in which they repeatedly adopt the confessional "kind of speaking", both directly to God and to his saints, which was identified by the Cistercian scribe as originating in the *Confessiones*. Although examples abound everywhere in his prayers, it is specifically the confessional speech through which Anselm, with words and images borrowed from the *Confessiones*, constructs himself as an Augustinian sinner which I intend to examine here.⁷¹ The earliest of Anselm's meditations, the *Deploratio virginitatis male amissae* written around 1070,⁷² provides an excellent starting place since it makes use of the whirlpool image already familiar from the Augustinian intertextuality of both Aelred and Goscelin. But Anselm's engagement of this image differs significantly from theirs, for he finds the very process of confessing his sins of concupiscence tantamount to "tumbling round in a whirlpool of bitterness", to repeatedly "revolving in an eddy of bitternesses", just as he has in the past "revolved" in a "giddiness of lusts".⁷³ The change is not only indicative of Anselm's method of prayer, which sees him agonizing repeatedly over his sins, blesses him with the Augustinian experience of feeling "gnawed away" internally⁷⁴ and at times traps him in his own confessions much as he has been trapped in his earlier sins:

(Cambridge and New York, 1990), p. 117.

⁷¹ For a long and detailed study of Anselm's use of the *Confessiones* in the *Orationes sive meditationes*, as well as in the *Proslogion*, see: OLSON, *Textual Construction*, 1, pp. 107-140.

⁷² On the early date of this meditation, see: SOUTHERN, *Anselm and His Biographer*, p. 46. IDEM, *Anselm: A Portrait*, p. 105. *The Prayers and Meditations of St Anselm with the Proslogion*, trans. B. WARD (London, 1973), p. 74.

⁷³ Anselm, *Orationes sive meditationes*, ed. F.S. SCHMITT, *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi opera omnia*, III (Edinburgh, 1946), *Meditatio* II, ll. 48-49: "*Volutare in gurgite amaritudinis, qui delectatus es in volutabro turpitudinis*", and II, ll. 57-58: "*Revolvare et revolvare in eundem turbinem amaritudinum, qui totiens revolutus es in eandem vertiginem libidinum*".

⁷⁴ Anselm, *Oratio* V, ll. 31-33: "*En quippe vos, peccata mea, quomodo discernendo distrahitis, distrahendo corroditis, corrodendo torquetis praecordia mea*". Augustine also feels his "spirit" and "soul" being "dismembered" (*Confessiones*, VIII, c. 10, l. 51: *discerpere animum*; *Ibidem*, VIII, c. 10, ll. 63-64: *anima discerpi*), and describes being "gnawed within and violently confounded with a horrible shame" (*Confessiones*, VIII, c. 7, ll. 34-35: "*Ita rodebar intus et confundebar pudore horribili uehementer*"). See also: *Confessiones*, VI, c. 4, ll. 4-5, where Augustine records how his spiritual uncertainty "gnaws at his innermost aspects" (*rodere intima mea*) and speaks of being much ashamed (*magis pudere*).

[my sins] are not healed without confession, and they are not brought forward without confusion. If they are concealed, they are incurable; if they are seen, they are detestable.⁷⁵

But his adaptation of the Augustinian image is also exemplary in relation to the readings of other monastic men of his time, who, like Goscelin in his *Liber confortatorius*, use their Augustine in creative, original and personally relevant ways. Yet more striking among Anselm's echoes of Augustine is his depiction of the sinning self as internally or spiritually wounded by his sins, a hideous and memorable metaphor which is most fully developed in the *Oratio ad sanctum Petrum*. Here Anselm describes himself as a "sickly sheep" bearing the

bites of wolves and the gashes of wounds which it incurred by wandering, and the ulcers which it has long sustained in neglect.⁷⁶

In so doing, he calls explicitly upon Augustine's descriptions of his unwell "soul" as "ulcerous", of himself as an "unlucky sheep straying from the flock" and "defiled with a foul scab".⁷⁷ Both men push the analogy *ad nauseam*, with Augustine elaborating on how indulging in sinful desires is like "scratching" this scab of sin with one's "nails" until it results in a "boiling tumor and a decay and a horrible bloody matter",⁷⁸ and Anselm describing how "full-grown ulcers, open wounds deteriorated by decaying, quickly draw" the sinful sheep "to death".⁷⁹

Very few quotations of this sort are necessary to clarify that Anselm, like Augustine before him, was writing in an "affective" tradition and aiming for an emotional response from his readers – a response which would, to quote our Cistercian scribe, move the "will into the love of God", if only by frightening it away from a hideous and detrimental worldly indulgence. Anselm's comments on how he hoped his *Orationes sive meditationes* would be received by

⁷⁵ Anselm, *Oratio* V, ll. 34-36: "Non sanantur sine confessione, nec produntur sine confusione. Si celantur, sunt insanabilia; si videntur, sunt detestabilia".

⁷⁶ *Oratio* IX, l. 23: "morbida ovis". *Oratio* IX, ll. 25-26: "Pio et medico pastori morsus luporum et scissuras vulnere quae errando incurrit et ulcera quae longa incuria nutritur revelat".

⁷⁷ Augustine, *Confessiones*, III, c. 1, ll. 8-9: non bene ualere anima mea et ulcerosa. *Ibidem*, III, c. 2, ll. 43-45: "Infelix pecus aberrans a grege tuo et impatiens custodiae tuae turpi scabie foedarer".

⁷⁸ Augustine, *Confessiones*, III, c. 2, ll. 48-49: "Quasi ungues scalpentium feruidus tumor et tabes et sanies horrida consequbatur".

⁷⁹ Anselm, *Oratio* IX, ll. 32-33: "Adulta ulcer, et illisa vulnera, putrescendo peiorata, cito eam trahunt ad mortem".

both his male monastic and female lay audience confirm this emotional focus. In his *Prologus* to the collection Anselm claims that his devotions are to be read meditatively for “exciting the mind of the [one] reading to the love or fear of God, or to the investigation of the self”, and specifically for “kindling the affection of praying” or “piety”.⁸⁰ In his letter to his monastic friend Gundolf at Caen he suggests that the prayers to Mary he sends along with his letter should be read and meditated upon in such a way that “contrition or love” will lead the reader to heavenly things.⁸¹ In his letter to Adelaide, the daughter of William the Conqueror to whom he sent seven of his pieces along with extracts from the Psalms in c.1072, he advises saying them slowly and carefully from “the innermost heart” in order to “kindle love” and ultimately offer a “sacrifice of prayer”.⁸² And finally, in the letter which he sent in 1104 to Matilda of Tuscany along with a complete collection of his devotional pieces, he reiterates how the prayers are intended to “excite the mind” of the reader to “love or fear” or self-knowledge and to “excite the affection” of that reader to prayer.⁸³ Matilda is even told to use those pieces which may not “pertain” particularly to her as exemplary for the composition of her own prayers,⁸⁴ making it clear

⁸⁰ Anselm, *Orationes sive meditationes*, *Prologus*, ll. 2-5: “*Orationes et Meditationes quae subscriptae sunt, quoniam ad excitandam legentis mentem ad dei amorem vel timorem, seu ad suimet discussionem editae sunt, non sunt legendae in tumultu, sed in quiete, nec cursim et velociter, sed paulatim cum intenta et morosa meditatione*”. *Ibidem*, l. 7: “*ad accendendum affectum orandi*”. *Ibidem*, l. 12: “*pietatis affectum*”.

⁸¹ Anselm, *Epistola* 28. *Ad Gundolfum monachum*, ed. SCHMITT, *Anselmi opera omnia*, III, ll. 15-18: “*Et utinam ita sint longae ut, antequam ad finem cuiuslibet earum legendo vel potius meditando perveniatur, id ad quod factae sunt, compunctio scilicet contritionis vel dilectionis, in eis per supernum respectum inveniatur*”. I am grateful to Joseph Jones of the University of British Columbia’s Walter C. Koerner Library for providing the Latin of this letter in the eleventh hour.

⁸² Anselm, *Epistola* 10. *Ad Adelidem*, ed. SCHMITT, *Anselmi opera omnia*, III, ll. 18-22: “*Si intimo corde dicantur, cum vacat, plus tendunt ad accendendum amorem. In omnibus vero septem hortor vos ego, servus et amicus animae vestrae, ut attendere dignemini – etiamsi vos id melius faciatis –, qua humilitate et quo affectu timoris et amoris offerendum sit sacrificium orationis*”. We know from Anselm’s description in this letter that the pieces he sent to Adelaide certainly included *Meditatio* I and *Orationes* XIII and XVI, and may also have included *Orationes* VIII, IX, X and XI. On Adelaide and the prayers sent to her, see: SOUTHERN, *Anselm: A Portrait*, pp. 92-93. *Idem*, *Anselm and His Biographer*, p. 37 and pp. 42-43.

⁸³ Anselm, *Epistola ad Mathildam*, ll. 6-8: “*ad excitandum legentis mentem ad dei amorem vel timorem seu ad suimet discussionem*”. *Ibidem*, l. 10: “*ad excitandum affectum orandi*”. The letter is appended to the end of the *Prologus* to the *Orationes et Meditationes* (SCHMITT, *Anselmi opera omnia*, III, p. 4). On Matilda and the devotional pieces sent to her, see: SOUTHERN, *Anselm and His Biographer*, p. 37. *Idem*, *Anselm: A Portrait*, p. 99 and pp. 111-112.

⁸⁴ Anselm, *Epistola ad Mathildam*, ll. 4-6: “*In quibus quamvis quaedam sint quae ad*

that Anselm expects her not only to read his rich devotional Latin, but also to speak and write her own Latin prayers, presumably emulating his mode and language, and fashioning her confessional self – a decidedly Augustinian self – in heart and speech and text, just as Anselm's monastic followers did both before and after his death.⁸⁵ This corresponds well with the fact that twelfth-century manuscripts in which the pictorial representations most probably derive from the presentation copy of the *Orationes sive meditationes* which Anselm originally sent to Matilda, this pious and powerful noblewoman is immediately present as a participant in Anselm's devotional activities, for she appears in the illustrations both as a suppliant to Christ, praying along with Anselm, and as a reader of Anselm's book, receiving his devotions along with his monks.⁸⁶ This dominant position of Matilda in the early manuscripts of Anselm's devotions – manuscripts which in some cases were made for or eventually belonged to communities of medieval nuns⁸⁷ – is appropriate not only because of her prominent role in disseminating copies of Anselm's *Orationes sive meditationes*,⁸⁸ but also because her inclusion presents, in concrete imagery and in one of the books which facilitated it, the important participation of eleventh- and twelfth-century women in the monastic devotional tradition of textual self-construction through Augustinian *confessio*.

The answer, then, to the question posed in my title of whether English women of the eleventh and twelfth centuries read Augustine's *Confessiones* or not, must remain, at least for now, a resonant probably – probably the most learned among them did, no doubt particularly those who had taken religious

vestrem personam non pertinent, omnes tamen volui mittere, ut, si cui placuerint, de hoc exemplari eas possit accipere".

⁸⁵ On the early monastic (and later) additions to Anselm's devotional collection, see: WARD, *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 278–286. SOUTHERN, *Anselm and His Biographer*, p. 35 and p. 42. OLSON, *Textual Construction*, I, pp. 128–130. The grand majority of the prayers and meditations by both Anselm and later writers can be found in MIGNE, *PL* 158 (1864), cols. 709–1016.

⁸⁶ See the discussion and illustrations in: O. PÄCHT, "The illustrations of St Anselm's prayers and meditations", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 19 (1956), pp. 68–83. See also: SOUTHERN, *Anselm: A Portrait*, p. 112. The presentation manuscript was most likely English and produced by the monks of Canterbury.

⁸⁷ Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Auct.D.2.6, dating to c.1150, belonged to the nuns of Littlemore, near Oxford, in the thirteenth century. Admont, Stiftsbibliothek MS 289, from the third quarter of the twelfth century, appears to have been made for Abbess Diemuth of the convent of Traunkirchen in Austria. PÄCHT, "Illustrations", p. 69 and p. 71.

⁸⁸ See: SOUTHERN, *Anselm and His Biographer*, p. 37, where it is noted that Matilda "was in a position to make the collection known, and a whole family of manuscripts in Austria and Italy has been shown to descend from her copy".

vows, just as the most learned monastic men of the period did. If, however, we ask whether these women might have perceived and fashioned their devotional and progressive interiorities in ways reminiscent of Augustine's self-construction in the *Confessiones*, much as the men who wrote texts of spiritual guidance for them did, then the answer would appear to be yes, and to remain affirmative through a wider range of literacy and society, applying also to lay and perhaps even illiterate women of pious leanings.

Certainly this is what the authors (Goscelin, Aelred and Anselm) who engaged the *Confessiones* for the benefit of women readers appear to have intended, and in order to accomplish this goal they were careful to describe for, assume in and teach to these women a personal devotional literacy in which reading is a predominantly internal process laden with affection and undertaken to enhance the spiritual progress of the individual. As Anselm tells Adelaide just before he instructs her in how to read his prayers, the devotional book he sends is not the kind of valuable worldly "gift" that she, both wealthy and noble, might expect in a codex, yet she should not "despise" it, for, although

it is not encrusted with gold and gems, the whole is assuredly made in charitable faithfulness and given in faithful charity.⁸⁹

The claim highlights not only the close spiritual relationships between pious men and women which enabled both the development of female monasticism in eleventh- and twelfth-century England and the transmission of the Augustinian tradition under discussion here to women like Eve, Aelred's sister, Adelaide and Matilda,⁹⁰ but also the way in which Anselm, like Augustine before him, wrote confessionally "for the love" of God's "love", creating a kind of book which excites the "affection", inspires similarly devout and loving confessions in his readers and, in the words of our Cistercian scribe, excites the "wills of those reading into the love of God".⁹¹

⁸⁹ Anselm, *Epistola* 10. *Ad Adelidem*, II. 10-12: "*Exiguum et vile munus quod vobis mittit nostra pauper parvitas, rogo ne despiciat vestra dives nobilitas. Si enim non est auro gemmisque crustatum, est certe totum caritativa fidelitate factum et fideli caritate donatum*".

⁹⁰ ELKINS, *Holy Women*, especially p. xix and pp. 161-162, argues that during the period of the greatest fervour and expansion of the religious life for women in England, the relationships established between religious men and women was a vital component in the success of female religion. See also the study of the relationships between religious women and their spiritual guides in: A.C. BARTLETT, *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature* (Ithaca and London, 1995), especially pp. 86-114.

⁹¹ Augustine, *Confessiones*, II, c. 1, l. 3 and XI, c. 1, l. 6: "*amore amoris tui facio istuc*".

Yet all instructions aside, the matter ultimately depends upon whether the women concerned actually read (or listened), reflected and prayed in the spirit of "divine affection" as Augustine and their spiritual guides advised, but I can see no reason why the conscientious at least would not have. Certainly the religious choices of women like Eve and Aelred's sister imply a predisposition for seeking self-knowledge and spiritual progress in textual and meditative experience, while the requests of women like Aelred's sister and both Adelaide and Matilda for the spiritual guidance they received indicate that they intended to make personal spiritual use of the works they requested, much as, say, the abbot and monks of Casa-Dei did with Anselm's *Meditatio* I.⁹²

In addition, there is considerable (though scattered) evidence to suggest that medieval women beyond those four studied here participated in this kind of devout reading and Augustinian self-construction. For one, there is the ownership of illustrated manuscripts of Anselm's prayers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by communities of nuns in Austria and England (as noted above), and, of course, the involvement of the nuns of Sempringham and the scribe, Diemud of Wessobrunn, with manuscripts of the *Confessiones* themselves. Secondly, there is the fact that Abelard puts the Augustinian language of sin – namely the idea of being immersed in a "Charybdis" of worldly pleasures – into the mouth of Heloise as he describes her arguments against marriage in the *Historia calamitatum*,⁹³ while Gertrude the Great of Helfta, as she addresses God in an Augustinian manner at the close of the autobiographical second book of the *Legatus memorialis abundantiae divinae pietatis*, quotes Augustine much as Anselm did to claim that she has written and will write "for

Anselm, *Oratio ad sanctam Mariam Magdalenam*, XVI, l. 80: "*amore tui amoris hoc facio*". This is perhaps the closest Anselm ever comes to directly citing the *Confessiones* in his *Orationes sive meditationes*. The second instance of the phrase in Augustine is preceded by the claim (quoted above) similar to that in the *retractatio* – namely that he narrates his confessions to excite the "affection" of readers, as of himself, inspiring them to a confession of praise (*confessio laudis*: XI, c. 1, ll. 2-5) like that with which his *Confessiones* open.

⁹² See: *Epistola 70 A Durando abbate Casae-Dei*, ed. SCHMITT, *Anselmi opera omnia*, III, where Durandus describes the way in which Anselm's first *Meditatio* pours "pious tears" (*pieae lacrimae*; l. 9) from Anselm's "contrite heart" (*contritum cor*; l. 9) "into the hearts" of the reading monks of Casa-Dei ("*in cordibus nostris*"; ll. 11-12), thus inspiring both their piety for God and their love for Anselm. The letter is quoted and discussed at greater length in: OLSON, *Textual Construction*, I, pp. 127-128.

⁹³ MUCKLE, "Abelard's letter", p. 188: "*Si autem sic laici gentilesque vixerunt, nulla scilicet professione religionis astricti, quid te clericum atque canonicum facere oportet ne divinis officiis turpes praeferas voluptates, ne te praecipitem haec Charybdis absorbeat, ne obscoenitatibus istis te impudenter atque irrevocabiler immergas?*"

the love" of God's "love" in order to increase his "praise".⁹⁴ Furthermore, there is the important role played by pious noblewomen like Countess Matilda in the transmission (both in England and on the continent) of personal devotion and devotional literacy from the monasteries to lay culture.⁹⁵

Even if we turn away from Europe as a whole to focus exclusively on medieval England, evidence of women using the Augustinian model of the *Confessiones* to think and read and write about their interiority abounds. Thus the translation of Aelred's *De institutione inclusarum* into the two different Middle English versions mentioned above reveals a demand among fourteenth- and fifteenth-century religious women in England for the texts of spiritual instruction and confessional self-construction which I have discussed here, while the early thirteenth-century *Ancrene Wisse* not only makes use of the *Confessiones* in several places, but also recommends a searching of one's whole life in order to produce a proper confession and a kind of spiritually beneficial reading in which "reading is good prayer".⁹⁶ And the trend continues

⁹⁴ Gertrude of Helfta, *Legatus memorialis abundantiae divinae pietatis*, ed. P. DOYÈRE, *Gertrude d'Helfta: Oeuvres spirituelles*. II. *Le Héraut*, Livres I et II (Paris, 1968), II, c. 24, 1, ll. 1-4: "Ecce, amantissime Domine, talentum tuae dignantissimae familiaritatis mihi extremæ vilitatis indignae creditum, amore amoris tui ad lucrum laudis tuae tam in praescriptis quam in postpositis expono". Gertrude's female biographer (almost certainly another Helfta nun) also demonstrates an awareness of the Augustinian tradition of monastic self-construction when she writes, in Book I of the same work, that Gertrude had undergone a spiritual conversion after "she recognized that she was far from God in a region of unlikeness" (*Ibidem*, I, c. 1, 2, ll. 6-7: "recognovit se longe fuisse a Deo in regione dissimilitudinis"). The reference is to Augustine, *Confessiones*, VII, c. 10, l. 17 ("inueni longe me esse a te in regione dissimilitudinis"), though much of the thought behind it might have come to Helfta through the Cistercian writings (particularly those of Bernard) which were so influential at that house and which so often use the phrase "regio dissimilitudinis". See the discussion of the twelfth-century Cistercian use of the phrase in: OLSON, *Textual Construction*, II, pp. 73-122. E.A. PETROFF, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (New York and Oxford, 1986), p. 208, notes the strong influence of Bernard's writings at Helfta.

⁹⁵ See, for instance: SOUTHERN, *Anselm and His Biographer*, p. 37, who notes how it was the "conjunction of monastic piety and the religious impulses of great ladies which chiefly fashioned the private devotions of the Middle Ages". S.G. BELL, "Medieval women book owners: Arbiters of lay piety and ambassadors of culture", in: *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages*, ed. J.M. BENNETT e.a. (Chicago and London, 1989), pp. 135-161, p. 136, who emphasizes how "women substantially influenced the development of lay piety...in the later Middle Ages", since they "frequently bought and inherited religious as well as secular books, and spent considerable time reading them. In particular, as readers of vernacular literature, as mothers in charge of childhood education, as literary patrons who commissioned books and translations, and as wives who married across cultural and geographical boundaries, women had a specific and unique influence".

⁹⁶ *Ancrene Wisse*, ed. J.R.R. TOLKIEN, *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwe: Ancrene*

in the work of the two most well-known Middle English women authors. The fourteenth-century recluse and visionary, Julian of Norwich, would appear to be drawing upon the *Confessiones* when she writes in her *Showyngs* of the restless human soul, of the intimate internal relationship between God and humanity, and of the presence of God within the individual soul,⁹⁷ while Margery Kempe's fifteenth-century autobiography of gradual spiritual conversion and progress, along with her intimate internal conversations with God, might well owe much to a tradition of constructing an affective and changeable feminine spirituality which found some important origins in Augustine's *Confessiones*.⁹⁸ Indeed, both Julian and Margery, "writing in the mystical tradition of personal dialogue with a divine being who is Creator, Father, and Lover, discover and reveal themselves in discovering and revealing the Other",⁹⁹ just as Augustine, in the *Confessiones* which lie at the heart of this mystical tradition,¹⁰⁰ combines his search for God with a search for self.

Finally, there can be no doubt that the influence of the *Confessiones* is paramount in the Middle English translation of the Pseudo-Augustinian *Soliloquia animae ad Deum* made sometime between 1365 and 1425 for a group, probably a convent, of religious women.¹⁰¹ For these *Soliloquia* were compiled with extracts from the *Confessiones*, among other works, and their prologue opens with a statement of authorial intention and readerly instruction that is so

Wisse Edited from MS Corpus Christi College Cambridge 402 (London and New York, 1962: EETS OS 249), IV, p. 148, l. 15: "Redunge is god bone". See: *Ibidem*, V, p. 174, ll. 13-21, for the Augustinian-style self-reflection necessary to confession, and the list of echoes of the *Confessiones* in the *Ancrene Wisse* recorded in: *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works*, trans. A. SAVAGE and N. WATSON (New York and Mahwah, 1991), p. 447.

⁹⁷ A *Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, ed. E. COLLEDGE and J. WALSH (Toronto, 1978), Part 1: *Introduction and The Short Text*, c. 4, ll. 49ff, p. 216; and Part 2: *The Long Text, Appendix, Bibliography, Glossary, Index*, c. 56, ll. 11ff, p. 571, and c. 68, ll. 29ff, pp. 642-643.

⁹⁸ *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. S.B. MEECH and H.E. ALLEN (London, 1940: EETS OS 212).

⁹⁹ M.G. MASON, "The other voice", in: *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton, 1980), pp. 210-211.

¹⁰⁰ See: J. LECLERCQ, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. C. MISRAHI (New York, 1961), p. 124, who notes how "monasticism's teachers retained" from the *Confessiones* "the testimony of the mystic".

¹⁰¹ The translator addresses his audience as "my gode sustren" and claims that he is "englysshinge these meditaciouns & confessiouns of seint austyn" at their request: "I haue now performyd your desyre" (p. 75). See: R.S. STURGES, "A Middle English version of the Pseudo-Augustinian *Soliloquies*", *Manuscripta* 29 (1985), pp. 73-79, who reports two fifteenth-century manuscripts of the work – London, British Library MS Cotton Titus C.xix and Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, Houghton Library Richardson MS 22.

similar to the sentiments recorded by the eleventh- and twelfth-century authors and readers of the *Confessiones* studied here that it merits quotation:

These Meditacyons or prayers that bene writen with in this boke suwyng bene made to excite and sterve the mynde of the reder to the drede of god and to the loue of god and to verey knowyng of hymselfe.¹⁰²

The excitement of the “mynde” and emotions (“drede” and “loue”) of the reader, the hope that this text will inspire within that reader self-reflection of a spiritually beneficial kind – these are the aims of Anselm, Adam and Goscelin, as well as of this fifteenth-century spiritual guide of women. Combined with the echoes of the *Confessiones* in later medieval literature by and for women, such parallels in intention cannot help but reinforce the suggestion offered by the eleventh- and twelfth-century texts of Goscelin, Aelred and Anselm that the *Confessiones*, and especially the male monastic reception of that autobiography in the first centuries of its reintroduction into England, when it served as reading for the progressing souls of these monastic men,¹⁰³ played an essential role in initiating and authorizing a particularly feminine form of medieval Christian interiority as well. Indeed, it seems probable that the learned text in which Augustine himself was so concerned with how to read all created things correctly for the reformation of his soul exerted an influence, if often indirect, upon how eleventh- and twelfth-century women read both texts and themselves in an intimate, confessional and internally progressive kind of dialogue with God. And in this way, the *Confessiones* of Augustine’s progressing “feelings” may ultimately have acted as an essential textual spark for firing the affective piety – the intense emotional expression of what Goscelin would call “divine affection” – which became so closely associated with the devotional and meditative experience of later medieval women.

¹⁰² STURGES, “Middle English *Soliloquies*”, p. 76.

¹⁰³ The reintroduction of the *Confessiones* into England came after what would appear to be a neglect of nearly two hundred years. See the discussion of the possible absence of the *Confessiones* in England prior to the Norman conquest and their rapid reintroduction into the country in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries in: OLSON, *Textual Construction*, especially I, pp. 1-16. See also: T. WEBBER, “The diffusion of Augustine’s *Confessions* in England during the eleventh and twelfth Centuries”, in: *The Cloister and the World: Essays Presented to B.F. Harvey*, ed. W.J. BLAIR and B.J. GOLDING (Oxford, 1996), pp. 29-45.

Reading, Singing and Understanding: Constructions of the Literacy of Women Religious in Late Medieval England

KATHERINE ZIEMAN

The nature of women's literate activity in the late Middle Ages is difficult to assess: women's interactions with the written word are largely undocumented, and what documents we do possess come predominantly from the hands of male clerics who were not concerned with documenting women's literacy as such. Yet many such records are valuable, if only for the constructions of women's literacy they implicitly or explicitly articulate, for these constructions allow us to see how gender participated in the formulation of literate authority. Literacy, whether defined in medieval or modern terms, is not a unitary or uniform activity, nor does it have meaning outside of the social formations that determine how written texts might function within them. The term "*litteratus*" (as well as its modern reflex "literate") does not merely designate the ability to read, or even the ability to read Latin, but rather defines and delineates authorized textual practices, distinguishing them from both non-authoritative and unauthorized literate activity, as well as from practices that neither involve nor require written texts. The precise nature of this distinction is, furthermore, unstable, and definitions of literacy inevitably shift as they are brought to bear on particular situations, each with its own convergence of ideological concerns.

The maintenance of gender distinctions is, of course, one of those concerns. Although many women read, and may even have taught children Latin prayers and elementary reading skills,¹ they were rarely accorded the status

¹ M.T. CLANCHY, "Learning to read and the role of mothers", in: *Studies in the History of*

"*litterata*". The strong association between literate status and male clerical identity generally relegated all such textual interactions to the non-clerical realm of the domestic and the private. There is, however, at least one area in which women's literate activity encroached upon the male clerical realm: the liturgical reading and singing of women religious. The daily performance of the liturgy was integral to every monastic rule. While this performance constituted part of the ascetic discipline required of monks and nuns, and was often figured as form of obedience, the divine office was nonetheless the ritual performance of written texts, read and sung before God on behalf of the Christian community. As such, liturgy performs clerical authority over texts and situates that authority within the Christian community. Since the *opus Dei* was the duty of the entire clerical community – not merely that of priests, but of clerks, monks, and nuns – it served to distinguish them as a whole from the laity. Insofar as nuns formed a part of that group, liturgical performance was their only sanctioned exercise of clerical authority, and the skills required to perform the liturgy were the only regularly acknowledged form of clerical learnedness required of them.

The relationship of nuns to the liturgy has, however, received little attention. The fact that service books comprised the overwhelming majority of their libraries has instead been seen either as an indication of their lack of learning or as a matter to be glossed over in the search for more substantial modes of literacy, or at least for ways of interacting with the written word that would seem to hold a greater promise of interpretive agency than mere recitation.² Such endeavors are, of course, useful, but they fail to take into account the uses and purposes of liturgical performance within medieval culture, uses that, particularly in England, were often fraught and contested.³ These conflicts register broader concerns about the relationship of individual Christians to the texts that constituted their community. In terms of the liturgy, medieval writers often focus such concerns on the issue of "understanding" – a function of inter-

Reading, ed. G. BROOKS and A.K. PUGH (1984), pp. 33-39. IDEM, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (second edition; Oxford, 1993), p. 13, p. 112 and pp. 251-252.

² See, for example: E. POWERS, *Medieval English Nunneries, c. 1275 to 1535* (Cambridge, 1922; reprinted: New York, 1964), pp. 260-284. D.N. BELL, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries* (Kalamazoo, 1995: *Cistercian Studies* 158), pp. 34-36. R. GILCHRIST, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (London and New York, 1994), p. 25 and pp. 139-140, has given much-needed attention to the material culture of liturgy (though not the texts).

³ See: K. ZIEMAN, *Reading and Singing: Liturgy, Literacy, and Literature in Late Medieval England* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California-Berkeley, 1997), chapters 1-3 for a more detailed description of the uses of liturgy in late medieval England.

pretive agency that (then as now) eludes precise definition. While I will only be able to give the briefest summary of these broader matters here, it is clear that they are often played out in discussions of the reading and singing of women religious; as the only participants in ritual performance who could not even potentially gain entry to male priesthood, they represent the limit of definitively clerical contributions to the Christian community precisely where they border upon lay participation in that same community.⁴ Here, then, I shall focus on the ways in which constructions of nuns' liturgical literacy were implicated in such investigations.

Grammatical and liturgical literacy

The Vernon Manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS poet. a.I) contains a copy of a treatise, dated to the late thirteenth century, giving instructions to layfolk who wished to participate more fully in the mass. Similar to other such vernacular texts on the manner of hearing mass that circulated from the late thirteenth century on, this treatise prescribes a series of prayers and gestures, choreographed to the various parts of the rite.⁵ At the reading of the gospel, however, the lay witness to the ritual is advised to stand still and silent, to bear witness to the Word of God:

Al 3or lykyng þer-on leip
 To wite what þe prest seiþ,
 Holliche þat 3e here hit.
 Þau3 3e vnderstonde hit nou3t,
 3e may wel wite þat god hit wrou3t,
 And þefore wisdom were hit
 ffor to worschupe al godes werkes,
 To lewed men þat ben none clerkes.⁶

⁴ Boy choristers were another group upon whom explorations of the liminally clerical were often focused, but because these boys were usually seen as 'pre-clerics' who might eventually go on to higher orders, the terms in which they were discussed differ. See: K. ZIEMAN, *Reading and Singing*, pp. 1-42 *et passim*.

⁵ Several of these texts can be found in: *The Lay Folks' Mass Book, or the Manner of Hearing Mass*, ed. T.F. SIMMONS (London, 1879: EETS OS 71).

⁶ "How to hear Mass", in: *Minor Poems of the Vernon Manuscript*, ed. C. HORSTMANN 2 volumes (London, 1892-1901: EETS OS 98 and 117), II, pp. 493-511, II. 424-432.

The lay witness is advised to listen intently to the words spoken by the priest engaged in an act of ritual reading. Anticipating the objection that this reading is done in a foreign language, the writer explains that the irreducible divinity of the “*logos*” suffices for those who do not understand its grammatical structure. Knowing its divine origin is wisdom enough. The performance of the Word is further said to possess “*vertu*”, a transformative power, that can substitute for understanding:

so fareþ þer vndirstondyng fayles,
þe verrey vertu 3ow alle a-vayles.⁷

Such advice is meant as a gesture of inclusion, a response to the laity’s growing interest and desire to participate in divine service. Yet one also sees an effort to maintain the distinction between “*lewed men*” and “*clerkes*” within the ritual. The *exemplum* provided to demonstrate the dynamic between “*lewed men*” and the performed gospel suggests that the roles of lay and cleric were seen to be in tension with one another:

Per a Neddre hautes
3e may wel fynde and 3e wol seche.
He[o] vnderstond noþing þi speche,
Whon þou hire enchautes,
Neuerþeles heo wot ful wel
What is þi menyng eueri-del
Whon þat þou hire endautes.⁸

Although the image of snake and its charmer is meant to express the relation between God as the author of the Word and the sinner, it is also suggestive of a tension between the priest who ventriloquizes the Word and the “*lewed*” auditor, envisaged as a delicate and dangerous negotiation of power. It is likely no coincidence that this negotiation takes place during a moment of ritual reading. From the thirteenth century, the laity increasingly engaged in their own recitation of the psalter and various forms of the canonical hours. While this practice shows that the laity was in effect poaching on texts traditionally understood as definitively clerical, it was nevertheless encouraged by a Church more desirous of providing orthodox forms of devotion than engaging in an explicit

⁷ “How to hear Mass”, ll. 443-444.

⁸ “How to hear Mass”, ll. 435-441. I have adapted Simmons’ emendation in his edition of the treatise in *The Lay Folks’ Mass Book*. The scribal error suggests that the scribe may have been surprised by the gender of the adder.

turf war. Clerical distinctiveness was maintained in part by the development of an exclusively lay repertoire of texts, as seen in Books of Hours and devotional miscellanies, but this development was fundamentally undergirded by a dialectical redefinition of the relation of lay and clerical performers to their texts.

The laity's interactions with sacred texts were defined by the constraints of their illiteracy. The fact that layfolk prayed using written texts, often in Latin, required that a distinction be made not merely between literate and illiterate, but between literate and illiterate latinity. "Understanding" became the term that defined authoritative literacy, while the unlearned laity was characterized not merely by their inability to understand, but by their unattainable desire to do so. Such a construction required clerical authorities to provide a meaningful mode of interaction that could exist outside of understanding. In the *exemplum*, the relationship posited between text and hearing subject is one of passivity and receptivity, a hermeneutic grounded in the body. More than affective – since an affective relationship presumes the ability to discern at least the emotional content of an utterance – the relationship here is visceral. The witness to the mass is encouraged to engage in "meaning", but meaning is perceived in the body, not in the mind, and is constructed outside of understanding.

But more importantly, the lay subject is feminized. In addition to the passivity and bodiliness conventionally associated with the feminine, the snake itself is gendered female. The phallic tempter of Genesis has here been castrated – or, more precisely, domesticated. The result is a neatly aligned set of categories that distinguishes the male cleric, who actively enunciates the Word of God in this world, and the passive, feminized, lay person, held under his spell. This set of oppositions extended far beyond this particular treatise and beyond the practice of hearing mass, to include textual practices such as the reading of Books of Hours. Liturgy and devotion – originally two complementary and often simultaneous facets of contemplative textual interaction – became more clearly distinguished. Whereas liturgy was defined as public speech act occurring within ritual time and space, devotional recitation from Books of Hours was figured as a domestic form of this activity, occurring in the home as much as in the cloister, and strongly associated with women. It is surely no coincidence that depictions of St Anne teaching the Virgin to read begin to appear in England during the fourteenth century.⁹ Whatever practice such depictions represent, they also underscore the ideological division between for-

⁹ W. SCASE, "St Anne and the education of the Virgin: literary and artistic traditions and their implications", in: *England in the Fourteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1991 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. N. ROGERS (Stamford, 1993), pp. 81-96.

mally taught clerical performance and devotional reading, passed on from mother to daughter. Only the former of the these practices might generally qualify as 'literate'.

As the dialectical counterpart to devotion, liturgy, of course, was to be performed with understanding. As one might expect, however, the records only tend to mention this standard in its omission. One such record makes clear that determining the presence or absence of understanding in performative contexts was no easy matter. In 1387, William Wykeham, in his capacity as bishop of Winchester, visited the monastic cathedral of St Swithun's in 1387, and found their services wanting:

Item quia nonnulli commonachi et confratres ecclesie nostre predicte minime sapiunt in litteratura, non intelligentes quid legant, sed quasi prorsus ignorantes dum psallent vel legunt accentum breuem pro longo ponu[n]t pluries et econtra, et per nemora gradientes sanam scripturarum intellectum adulterant multociens et peruertunt fitque vt dum scripturas sacras non sapiant ad perpetrandum illicita prouiores reddant.¹⁰

Also, because some of the co-monks and co-brethren of our church aforesaid know very little of "*litteratura*", not understanding what they read, but as if ignorant of letters, put a short accent for a long one, and contrariwise, while reading and singing, and straying to the wilderness, frequently adulterate and pervert the sound meaning of Scripture, such that, since they do not know the sacred Scriptures, they are more likely to turn to illicit things.

Although explicitly concerned with the monks' spiritual well-being, Wykeham's quibble about syllable length implicitly underscores the liturgical status of their services. While Augustine, in his *De doctrina christiana*, said that "whether '*ignoscere*' is spoken with a long or short third syllable makes little difference to the man asking God to forgive his sins",¹¹ proper pronunciation matters a great deal to Wykeham, for the monks of St Swithun's do not merely ask forgiveness for their own sins, rather they do so on behalf of the entire Christian community. Such a formal relationship requires formal language, performed with legalist precision.¹² That such precision might also connect

¹⁰ Oxford, New College Archives, MS 3691, fol. 71r.

¹¹ Augustine of Hippo, *De doctrina christiana*, ed. J. MARTIN and K.-D. DAUR (Turnhout, 1962: *Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina* 32), II, c. 13, p. 45: "*Vtrum autem 'ignoscere' producta an correpta tertia syllaba dicatur, non multum curat, qui peccatis suis deum ut ignoscat petit, quolibet modo illud uerbum sonare potuerit*". Translation by: D.W. ROBERTSON Jr., *Augustine: De Doctrina Christiana* (1958; reprinted New York, 1986), p. 46.

¹² William Langland, *Piers Plowman: The C Version*, ed. G. KANE and G. RUSSELL (Berkeley and London, 1997), c. 13, ll. 117-125, makes this connection explicitly: "*A Chartre is cheleniable byfore a chief Iustice; / Yf fals latyn be in þat lettre þe lawe hit enpugneth, / Or*

faulty pronunciation and doctrinal error is the essence of literacy as defined by official culture. It is this conception of literacy that distinguishes what Martin Irvine has called "grammatical culture": the ideal of learnedness by which all modes of knowledge (textual, literary, spiritual, moral) are subsumed by linguistic knowledge as conveyed by instruction in grammar.¹³ As Wykeham states at the outset, the primary cause of the monks' faulty singing is said to be lack of knowledge of "*litteratura*". He eventually demands that the problem be addressed by finding a master to teach "novices and others insufficiently lettered" since, he claims, quoting the elementary grammatical text, Cato's *Monostichs*, "*legere et non intellegere necgligere est*" ("to read without understanding is to neglect"; literally, not to read at all).¹⁴ While Cato, writing for an audience of native speakers, had something else in mind when he made his sententious remark, for Wykeham formal grammatical instruction guarantees the understanding that distinguishes clerical, literate and liturgical performance.

Grammatical culture provided a holistic conception of knowledge that maintained the integrity of clerical identity. The reading habits of the laity were not, of course, the only threat to this integrity. Contemporary with developments in lay devotional practice, the rise of the chantry and related institutions of endowed prayer threatened to commodify liturgical performance.¹⁵ As endowed prayers and services grew in popularity, choral celebration of the *opus Dei*, and the gift economy in which it functioned, was placed in competition with services said in the memory of particular patrons, who had specific expectations of reward. Often favoring the mass as the most efficacious ritual, both lay and ecclesiastical patrons of means preferred to support teams of priests celebrating individually at any available altar, including those in reli-

peynted parentrelynarie, parsele ouerskipped. / The gome þat gloseth so Chartres for a goky is halden. / So [is hit] a goky, by god! þat in [his] gospel fayleth / Or in masse or in matynes maketh eny defaute: / 'Qui offendit in vno in om[n]ibus est reus'. / [To] ouerskipperes also in þe sauter sayth dauid: / 'Psallite deo nostro, psallite; quoniam Rex [terre] deus, psallite sapienter'".

¹³ M. IRVINE, *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory, 350-1100* (Cambridge, 1994: *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature* 19). My definition of "grammatical culture" has, of course, been greatly simplified for the purposes of argumentation. See especially pp. 1-22 for Irvine's more complex discussion.

¹⁴ Oxford, New College Archives, MS 3691, fol. 71r: "*Mandamus quatinus cum 'legere et non intellegere sit necgligere', nouicijs et alijs minis sufficienter litteratis idoneus decetero deputet[ur] magister, qui ipsos in primitivis sciencijs instruat diligenter iuxta regularia instituta*".

¹⁵ K. ZIEMAN, *Reading and Singing*, pp. 102-129 *et passim*.

gious houses, in order to maximize the spiritual rewards. Potentially disruptive to the ideal of the choral community of prayer, seemingly promoting mercenary uses of authorized knowledge, the popularity of endowed performance raised clear ethical questions concerning both the role of liturgy and the role of the performer within the earthly and spiritual economies of the Christian community.

One could, of course, expand this list endlessly, to include the rise of *lollardy*, the abuse of benefit of clergy tests, and any number of issues that questioned interpretive authority and clerical identity. The assertion of “understanding” as a self-evident expectation, one that ideally resulted in the communal performance of grammatical literacy, allowed ideological mastery over a range of issues. The presence of female performers of the office, however, held the potential to disrupt the integrity of grammatical culture. As women, their prayers were more closely associated with devotion than liturgy, but as religious, the celebration of the office formed the substance of their community. In some sense it justified their existence as a sub-community within the greater Christian community in both spiritual and socioeconomic terms. Thus the sanctity of the ritual – sanctity that its *latinity* helped to sustain – could not be overlooked, even when it was performed by women. But if the necessity of divine worship required them to be versed in Latin texts, it did not require them to be formally educated in Latin grammar, which was maintained as the preserve of the male cleric.¹⁶ Thus while their status was clearly not the same as that of the laity, “understanding” could not be unconditionally expected of them, and therefore could not be used as the term that distinguished them.

In some cases, the result was the assertion of different boundary between literate and illiterate status. Thomas Walsingham, not one known for innovative or alternative definitions, provides one such case. While extolling the virtues of Abbot Thomas, Walsingham speaks of his intervention in the nunnery of St-Mary-des-Prez. Upon visiting the nunnery, the Abbot found the community in disarray, having divided into two sects, one of “nuns” (“*moniales*”) and one of “sisters” (“*sorores*”), who could not agree with each other. In order to solidify the community, Abbot Thomas decreed that henceforth all should become not merely nuns, but literate nuns (“*litteratae ... moniales*”).¹⁷

¹⁶ Bell, *What Nuns Read*, pp. 65-68 *et passim*, has claimed that grammatical learning in nunneries was more common than has been supposed. My concern here, however, is less with actual practice than with constructed practice.

¹⁷ *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani*, ed. H.T. RILEY, 2 volumes (London, 1867: *Rolls Series* 28), II, p. 401: “*Et quia in eodem loco de Pratis habebantur duae sectae, scilicet, monialium et sororum, et neutra sectae consensit alterius, statuit ut secta sororum transiret in*

While it would appear that some kind of literate status separated nuns from sisters, it is not clear that the status corresponded to skill, since Walsingham claims that even the nuns were "for the most part illiterate", suggesting that, like the monks of St Swithun's, these nuns were not living up to their prescribed standard of learnedness. This standard, however, is articulated in different terms in the case of the nuns, as the passage in full shows:

ipsae moniales pro magna parte primitus illiteratae fuerunt, et servitium nullum dixerunt; sed in loco cuius libet Horae certas Orationes Dominicas et Salutationes Angelicas

the nuns were originally for the most part illiterate, and did not say their services, but instead substituted certain Lord's Prayers and Angelic Salutations.¹⁸

The nuns' illiteracy is thus marked not by mispronunciation, but rather by their failure to pronounce the texts at all.

The nuns' substitution of "*pater nosters*" and "*aves*" was a common strategy for those characterized as "*lewed*" who wished to participate in divine service. Because they were learned by rote by all good Christians, the use of these prayers could well signify that the illiterate nuns had simply not been introduced to the written page at all, yet Abbot Thomas' injunctions say nothing of learning to read, though the nuns are ordered to learn their services. There is no mention of a master or teacher, as at St Swithun's, but the nuns were given books from which to learn. Indeed the Abbot's gift of books seems to have been one of the chief motivations for the anecdote in the first place. As the record continues, it becomes clear that the donated books belonged to the monastery and were not Abbot Thomas' to give. Walsingham's account provides a meaningful motivation for the Abbot's prodigal gift. And it is primarily this motive (along with a characteristic penchant for snobbery) that causes Walsingham to mark the nuns as illiterate, in contradistinction to Wykeham's foreboding sense of spiritual catastrophe. The distinction between knowing one's services and understanding one's services is not made largely because it does not matter in this context.

The nuns' (desired) literate status, required solely for the purpose of liturgical performance, is thus not an authorized form of literacy without understanding; it is rather an authorized form of literacy in which the nature and necessity of understanding is not specified. This is the mode of textual interac-

sectam monialium, si sic vellent; et, quod secta sororum fatisceret, nulla ad eam de caetero recipienda; sed quae vellent locum incolere in posterum, litteratae fierent moniales".

¹⁸ *Gesta Abbatum*, II, p. 401.

tion I would like to call 'liturgical literacy', the performance of sacred Latin texts in which the relationship to grammatical understanding is ambiguous. While this ambiguity does not weigh heavily on Walsingham, it allowed other medieval writers to ask questions about the terms and functions of understanding that ideological definitions of grammatical literacy served to obscure. Unlike grammatical literacy, it did not imply a clearly defined set of skills. Liturgical performance could draw upon a number of learned abilities, from those we might qualify as musical (such as solmization), to phonetic decoding skill, to mnemonic techniques, to a variety of grammatical proficiencies, yet there was no systematically articulated hierarchy or sequence of these skills, as they were effectively subordinated to the imperative to perform. Because of the ambiguous relationship between skill and performance, and between performance and understanding, liturgical literacy could become a site for exploring all of these various relationships. And although there were a number of people and groups engaged in liturgically literate activities, the concept itself was most frequently associated with women religious.

Liturgical literacy and women religious

Texts written about and for women religious frequently explore the potentially fluid relationships between performer and text in liturgical performance, as well as the potentially fluid nature of understanding when it is not cemented to grammatical knowledge. The clearest example of such an exploration is surely Chaucer's dialectical pilgrims, the Prioress and the Second Nun. The tales of these two religious women have the most explicit liturgical intertextualities of any of the *Canterbury Tales*. "The Prioress' Tale" is the most obvious in its protagonist's singing of "*Alma redemptoris mater*" and its scattered allusions to the mass of Holy Innocents.¹⁹ Yet the "Second Nun's Tale" also retells the legend of St Cecilia – the story of her life that would be read at Matins on her feast day. Although the source of tale is Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* – a version not intended for liturgical performance – the Second Nun's prologue inflects Jacobus' texts by its allusions to "*Salve regina*", a Marian antiphon that, like the "*Alma redemptoris*", could be sung independently of its liturgical context.²⁰

¹⁹ B. BOYD, *Chaucer and the Liturgy* (Philadelphia, 1967), pp. 65-75. M. MADELEVA, *A Lost Language and Other Essays on Chaucer* (New York, 1951), pp. 52-53.

²⁰ See: S.L. REAMES, "A recent discovery concerning the sources of Chaucer's 'Second

The Prioress and the Second Nun are thus paired together in terms of what they make of and what they do with liturgical literacy. The Prioress champions singing explicitly characterized as illiterate as the purest form of piety. Although as a prioress she is in a position of power, Madame Eglentyne presents herself

as a child of twelf month oold, or lesse,
That kan unnethes any word expresse²¹

associating the “song” of her tale with her protagonist’s rendition of the antiphon “*Alma redemptoris mater*”. In her prologue, the Prioress implicitly sets the praise that comes forth innocently from the mouths of babes in opposition to that “*Parfourned ... by men of dignitee*”, and eventually favors the former, suggesting that infantile praise is better suited to the ineffable qualities of the Virgin that “*may no tonge expresse in no science*”.²² The “*litel clergeon*” is the perfect choice to further this opposition to formal, institutional knowledge: whereas the Prioress might be excluded from these institutions, the clergeon, as a male, pre-cleric, does have access to them, but chooses to shun them. The Prioress, in fact, details the clergeon’s assimilation of the antiphon in terms of the clergeon’s distance from all formal skills – from reading (his refusal to read the primer), from singing (his distance from the antiphoner) and from understanding (represented by his non-grammatical friend).²³ Motivated solely by the devotion imparted to him by his mother,²⁴ the clergeon refigures illiterate performance as a choice born of superior piety.

The fruit of that choice, his rendition of the “*Alma*”, learned though slightly illicit means, is the essence of passivity. The song is said to have “*passed thurgh his throte*” twice a day.²⁵ This unencumbered passage, however, comes to an end with the boy’s passage through the Jewry, which serves to contain and demonize those literate qualities the clergeon refuses. It is the Jews who, inspired by Satan, attend to the “sentence” of the song, turning the

Nun’s Tale”, *Modern Philology* 87 (1990), pp. 337-361. Possible allusions to this antiphon include the notorious crux, “I, unworthy sone of Eve”, which invites speculation beyond the scope of this essay concerning the performance of gender in liturgical recitation.

²¹ *The Canterbury Tales*, in: *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. L.D. BENSON (third edition; Boston, 1987), “The Prioress’ Tale”, ll. 484-485.

²² “The Prioress’ Tale”, l. 456 and l. 476.

²³ “The Prioress’ Tale”, ll. 516-519, ll. 534-535 and ll. 541-543.

²⁴ “The Prioress’ Tale”, ll. 509-511.

²⁵ “The Prioress’ Tale”, l. 548.

boy's devotional practice into an unwitting public performance.²⁶ Their response to the song plays upon the high literate metaphor of (grammatical) reading as digestion, in which the clergeon passes through the Jewry only to end up in the privy after the song has been "digested" by the Jews and their satanically-inspired hermeneutic. For the Prioress, such interpretive agency will yield only excrement. But despite the Jews' interpretive assault, the song remains intact. Reversing yet another high literate commonplace – that of the fruit and the chaff – the song itself is figured as the grain or fruit; the verbal surface remains the ultimate point of irreducibility. That this grain is in the end rather violently seized by a male cleric would seem to sustain the tension between institutional knowledge and illiterate devotion beyond whatever closure is afforded by the "soft" passing of the clergeon's soul.²⁷

"The Prioress' Tale" is placed in dialogue with that of the Second Nun, whose protagonist, St Cecilia, functions within a different dynamic of power, within which song represents a privileged understanding of faith. Like the little clergeon, St Cecilia begins the story singing, not in front of the Jews, but against the backdrop of her pagan marriage ceremony:

And whil the organs maden melodie,
To God allone in herte thus sang she.²⁸

While the little clergeon's performance was made public due to his innocent naivete, St Cecilia's private song shows her awareness both of her hostile surroundings and of the precious secret of the true faith she possesses. The tale unfolds by means of successive revelations of this secret knowledge. Although she, like the clergeon, ends her tale with miraculous speech acts, delivered "*with hir nekke ykorven*", she does not sing, but rather preaches.²⁹ Whereas the Prioress created a prepubescent protagonist to champion the feminized world of unlettered devotion, the Second Nun has created a woman with the authoritative knowledge to engage in the masculinized realm of public preaching. And yet for the Second Nun they are not discontinuous activities in competition with one another. Singing leads to preaching, and ultimately preaching leads to

²⁶ "The Prioress' Tale", l. 563.

²⁷ "The Prioress' Tale", ll. 669-671.

²⁸ "The Second Nun's Tale", ll. 134-135. Since "The Second Nun's Tale" was written before "The Prioress' Tale" one might as easily discuss the Prioress' as a response to the Second Nun, but there is no reason to believe that the tale composed later necessarily represents a more mature Chaucerian position.

²⁹ "The Second Nun's Tale", ll. 533-539.

public worship, for St Cecilia's final act is to convey her property to Pope Urban, that he might found a church in which "*Men doon to Crist and to his seint servyse*" perpetually.³⁰

Informing this continuum of praise is knowledge of the gospel, a knowledge that is figured as textual knowledge. When her husband Valerian visits Pope Urban for proof of Cecilia's claim that she is guarded by an angel, the angel appears to him with a book in hand that Valerian knows instinctively to read:

O Lord, o feith, o God, withouten mo,
O Cristendom, and Fader of all also.³¹

When Valerian confirms his belief in these words, he completes the catechetical exchange of transforming textual knowledge. For the Prioress, faith can precede textual knowledge, and is potentially independent of it, but for the Second Nun, privileged understanding is conveyed by reading and believing. Textual knowledge, however, does not seem to require grammatical knowledge in quite the same terms as were required of the clergeon and his school. Set in Rome in the early days of Christianity, the tale's characters are, (presumably) native Latin speakers; "*lewedness*", as represented by the "*lewed officer*" Almachius,³² is defined by a lack of privileged sight rather than a lack of grammatical knowledge. Nor is this knowledge the exclusive preserve of clerical authority. Although it is Pope Urban rather than St Cecilia who is the most closely associated with the angelic catechism, his disempowered relation to political authority precludes much of the "*dignitee*" that seemed to alienate the Prioress. The tale therefore removes the emphasis on a restrictive latinity and clerical authority, placing it instead on revelations of faith.

As if to continue the progressive gestures of publication that began with St Cecilia's private song and ended with her church, the Second Nun translates the legend that would be read in church for a broad audience of pilgrims. Because knowledge has been separated from grammar, translation becomes an appropriate means of conveying understanding, one that allows the Second Nun herself a high level of engagement. Proclaiming translation to be an antidote to idleness, she implies that the Prioress' devotion is the result of simple laziness. Whereas we never do find out what the "*Alma*" means, the Second

³⁰ "The Second Nun's Tale", l. 553.

³¹ "The Second Nun's Tale", ll. 207-208.

³² "The Second Nun's Tale", l. 497.

Nun goes far beyond the simple request to “*expowne*” that the clergeon made of his schoolmate in her etymological “*dilatio*” on the name of St Cecilia to reproduce high literate rhetorical tropes in English, showing the transferability and vitality of the latinate structures in the vernacular. Translation ultimately serves as an alternative to grammatical literacy, as a worthwhile use of one’s time, the product of which can make a legitimate claim on public attention.

That Chaucer might be interested in lending some of latinity’s authority to the vernacular is not a novel claim. That he pursues this interest by representing the relation of nuns to the liturgy, however, might seem more surprising. Yet nuns for Chaucer embody a social group whose equivocal relationship to lettered authority sets the motives and effects of authoritative speech in sharp relief. Meditations on these issues were not restricted to fictional representations; numerous texts produced for nuns engage also in this speculation. While the terms of these discussions are similar to Chaucer’s, the motives differ. Because their cloistered lifestyle prevented sustained contact with male spiritual advisors, treatises like the *Chastising of God’s Children* and *The Myroure of Oure Ladye* could serve as authoritative sources of spiritual advice in their absence.³³ Yet this distance also allowed and required writers of such treatises to articulate assumptions and anxieties about the roles of ritual and learning that would otherwise remain tacit. In taking on the role of advisor, these writers were able to explore, among other things, the relationship of a devotional self that had been gendered feminine to ritual performance that had to some degree been figured in opposition to it. Such articulations, however, are generally tempered by anxieties about feminine spirituality and its potential to unsettle grammatical culture.

The late fourteenth-century treatise, *The Chastising of God’s Children*, presents a regimen of vigilance and prayer designed to combat and control the omnipresent temptings of the devil.³⁴ Its primary concerns, as enumerated by Joyce Bazire and Eric Colledge, involve the suppression of heresy, “enthusiasms”, and false spiritual encounters.³⁵ Liturgy is offered as disciplinary antidote to such dangers, as implied by the text’s constant refrain: “*vigilate et orate*”. While any kind of prayer might help in one’s spiritual battle against the devil, the writer ends his treatise with an affirmation of liturgy, performed at

³³ *The Chastising of God’s Children*, ed. J. BAZIRE and E. COLLEDGE (Oxford, 1957). *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, ed. J.H. BLUNT (London, 1873: EETS ES 19).

³⁴ BAZIRE and COLLEDGE, *Chastising*, pp. 36-37, date the text between 1382 and 1408 and suggest that it may have been written for the nuns at the Benedictine abbey of Barking.

³⁵ *Chastising*, p. 47.

the appropriate hours and in Latin, as the best means of disciplining the soul. Like Chaucer's Prioress, he promotes performance without understanding:

If Ȝee wil aske how Ȝe shuln preie deuoutli in preier whiche Ȝe vndirstonde nat, I answeȝe Ȝou ȝerto and seie þat for þe uertu of þe wordis and Ȝoure lownesse and obeisaunce to holi chirche, wiþ a feruent desire upward to god aftir Ȝoure entent, þouȝ Ȝe vndirstonde no word þat Ȝe seie, it may be to Ȝou more medeful, and more acceptable to god þanne grete deuocioun þat Ȝe wene Ȝe haue in oþer preuy deuociouns.³⁶

But whereas Chaucer's Prioress promoted lack of understanding as a form of piety superior to that performed by "*men of dignitee*", the *Chastising*-author promotes it as a form of piety that secures obedience to them. The chief reason he gives for the importance of Latin is that it is the form to which the nuns are bound, "*aftir þe ordynance of holi chirche, and in þe maner as it was ordeyned by oure hooli fadirs*".³⁷ Latin liturgy symbolizes such obedience perhaps because of the desire to understand that is simultaneously constructed and frustrated, making performance in Latin an act of self-abnegation. But this self-abnegation is underlined by the opposition of "communal" to private that is grafted onto the opposition of Latin to vernacular. The contrast between the office and "*preuy deuotion*" is particularly striking, given that the nuns to whom the treatise is addressed apparently did not say their services together "*in choro*".³⁸ A "public" latinity, even in the absence of understanding is superior and opposed to "*preuy deuotions*", which he appears to presume are undertaken in the vernacular. Liturgy thus represents as an enactment of textual and linguistic "*communitas*" as an oppositional haven from a site of spiritual vulnerability that incorporates the vernacular, the private, and the devotional.

Like the lay witness to the mass, the nuns are offered "*vertu*" as a substitute for understanding.³⁹ On the whole, the *Chastising*-author seems to view his audience as a devout and (ideally) well-disciplined group of lay women following a rule rather than as a liminally clerical group capable of understanding in authoritative terms. They are to identify with the snake rather than with the charmer, even though they are technically playing both roles simultaneously.

³⁶ *Chastising*, pp. 221-222.

³⁷ *Chastising*, p. 221.

³⁸ The nuns are advised to select a time and place where they will be least disturbed to say their services and are encouraged to say them "*wiþ a felawe*" in order to keep their attention focused (*Chastising*, pp. 223-224).

³⁹ Bazire and Colledge suggest that "*uertu*" in this instance should be taken to refer merely to the superiority of Latin rather than its power (*Chastising*, pp. 73-74), but I find it difficult not to render it "power", given the suggested use of these texts elsewhere in the treatise.

Yet the fact that they themselves are enunciating the words changes the force of “*vertu*”. They can wield, as well as appreciate, the “*vertu*” of sacred texts, an act from which they gain measurable profit or “*mede*”. This “*vertu*” is further located in the individual words themselves that the nuns would see on the page and speak, rather than in the utterance as a whole, as might be the case with the lay auditor of the gospel. But insofar as they are given access to this power, they are encouraged to use words for what they do rather than for what they mean. Elsewhere in the treatise, the nuns are encouraged to use particular Latin verses and prayers, usually untranslated, as charms to ward off evil spirits or to combat lechery.

Such modes of magical thinking were not necessarily antithetical to high literate modes of thought in the same way that we oppose superstition to scientific inquiry, yet references in *Chastising* to women who did possess grammatical knowledge suggest that the writer imagines “*vertu*” to be all that women can extract from texts. Hildegard of Bingen, for example, who understood liturgy well enough to produce some of her own, is mentioned in an exemplum that shows the virtues of Psalm 69, 2:

Also sum vsen myche þis uerse: Deus in adiutorium meum intende. Of þis verse I rede þat seint hildegard, an hooli nunne, whanne she saide her sawtier, / al be it þat she vndirstode nat what she saide or radde, 3it at certeyn verse, and speciali anoon as she bigan þis psalm, she sai how þe deuels rannen awei from hir.⁴⁰

Ignorant of the meaning of one of the most common liturgical texts – the opening versicle of all canonical hours – Hildegard is here represented as an unlettered, though observant, performer, who assesses “*vertu*” through observation rather than understands through grammar. The *Chastising*-author may not have been aware of her liturgical writings, but he was likely aware of some version of her unconventional acquisition of literacy. As Hildegard tells the story in the introduction to her *Scivias*, she was visited in her forty-second year by a “fiery light” that conveyed upon her

the meaning of the exposition of the Scripture ... though [she] did not have the interpretation of the words of their texts or the division of the syllables or the knowledge of case or tenses.⁴¹

⁴⁰ *Chastising*, p. 204.

⁴¹ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, trans. C. HART and J. BISHOP, (New York, 1990: *Classics of Western Spirituality*), p. 59. The Latin version can be found in: MIGNE, *PL* 197, cols. 383B-384A: “Cum quadraginta duorum annorum septemque mensium essem, maximae coruscationis igneum lumen aperto veniens, totum cerebrum meum transfudit, et totum cor totumque pectus

For the *Chastising*-author, however, any literacy that distances itself from grammatical literacy is liturgical literacy, defined as the absence of understanding.

The *Chastising*-author's glossing of Hildegard's mystical end-run around formal grammatical instruction is surely related to his suspicion of mystical experience in general. While he does not refuse the possibility of authentic visionary experience, it is for him one of the more dangerous attractions of "*preuy deuotions*". And his suspicion deepens where mystic experience most resembles a hermeneutic alternative to grammar. Bazire and Colledge have noted how the *Chastising*-author appropriates Alphonse of Pecha's defense of Bridget of Sweden's revelations, using what was a substantiation of legitimate revelation as a set of litmus tests designed to discern false revelation.⁴² What this appropriation also reveals is an effacement of interpretive agency, and specifically, the agency to explicate. The *Chastising*-author translates Alphonse's third token of a true vision – that a true vision comes with its own interpretation:

Be pridde tokene to knowe a vision is whan he þat seep þat visioun, wheþir in bodili siȝt or in goostli siȝt, feeliþ in his soule a sodeyne goostli þing spryngyng wiþ an inwarde feelyng, and a knowyng of soopfatnesse, what it meeneþ and bitokeneþ, þe siȝt þat he seep, and whanne al þe vndirstondyng of þe matier þat he seep is uerili shewid hym in soule, and clierli is opene to hym, and plainli al þat is nedeful to be knowe of þat vision.⁴³

While *Chastising*'s translation ends here, Alphonse's discussion continues, stating that Bridget's visions always included an interlocutor – Christ, His Mother, an angel – who would clarify for her the similitudes and figurative words.⁴⁴ The *Chastising*-author, however, suppresses this example of divinely-imparted exposition. Although he suppresses many of Alphonse's specific allusions to Bridget's visions as part of his effort to provide generalized criteria by which to discern false visions, he suppresses authoritative support in this case as well. While he generally ends each section with supporting quotations from church authority or the examples of saints, this particular section provides

meum velut flamma ... Et repente intellectum expositionis librorum ... sapiebam, non autem interpretationem verborum textus eorum, nec divisionem syllabarum, nec cognitionem casuum aut temporum callebam".

⁴² *Chastising*, p. 48 and pp. 57-58.

⁴³ *Chastising*, p. 179.

⁴⁴ Quoted in notes to: *Chastising*, p. 291: "*a quibus declarabantur ei similitudines ille et verba figuraliter sibi dicta*".

a quotation from a single authority – Aquinas – followed by a preemptive reference to clerical authority in general:

To þis matier accordip many oþer doctours, whos wordis it nedip nat to shewe, for it sufficeþ ȝow to heere þat clerkis accorden to þat ȝe seen of oþer mens writyng.⁴⁵

The appeal to Aquinas as sole authority is itself instructive. Aquinas claims that while true revelation appeals to the intellect, false revelation appeals to the senses: demonic revelations manifest themselves

non quidem per illuminationem intellectus, sed per aliquam imaginariam visionem, aut etiam sensibiliter colloquendo.

not through illumination of the mind, but through some imaginary vision or else through sensible speech.⁴⁶

That the *Chastising*-author should choose a criterion that situates the intelligible over the sensible as the governing feature of true revelation is significant, in light of his distrust of bodily enthusiasms he associates with his audience's devotional piety. His vernacular rendering of Aquinas' statement focuses the distinction still further:

Þe deuel shewip to men þat þei knowe nat bi goostly liȝt of vndirstondyng aboue kynde, but bi sum oþer vision imagynatif, or ellis by sensible speche.⁴⁷

Truth is marked by a particular mode of “*vndirstondyng*”, which relates divine illumination to the grammatical competencies the nuns are said not to possess, but is then distinguished from these competencies by a supernatural quality that seemingly places it beyond human agency, though ultimately within clerical authority. While he will allow that a vision may be experienced “*in bodili siȝt or in goostli siȝt*”, it must also be accompanied by a “*sodeyne goostli þyng*” that reveals what is “*nedeful to be knowe*”. The immediacy of understanding marks its difference from the laboriousness of human exposition, yet the determination of what is necessary to know is placed in the hands of doctors whose words “*it nedep nat to shewe*”. The *Chastising*-author's concern with necessity underscores his more general effort to discourage the affective and devotional excess that his audience represents for him. In response to

⁴⁵ *Chastising*, p. 179.

⁴⁶ Quoted in notes to: *Chastising*, p. 290.

⁴⁷ *Chastising*, p. 179.

such excesses he constructs for them a particular kind of liturgical literacy – one which gives access to verbal power while constraining access to understanding – as a more institutionally grounded substitute for a frightening mystical literacy.

Bridget of Sweden exemplified the results of such mystical literacy. Like Hildegard, some of her mystical experiences ultimately issued in liturgical texts themselves – in verbal and musical texts to be used by particular communities of women religious.⁴⁸ The unique, and divinely-inspired, liturgy of the Bridgettine Order gave Bridget's followers a distinctive ritual that connected them to their founder. As such, they had a motive to understand that went beyond that of the audience of the *Chastising*. Acknowledging – indeed, celebrating – the particularity of the Bridgettine textual community, the anonymous author of the *Myroure of Oure Ladye* follows the path of Chaucer's Second Nun in providing understanding in the form of a translation of that liturgy for the nuns of the Bridgettine double monastery, Syon Abbey. There were possibly motives beyond a desire to give the nuns of Syon a fuller appreciation of their daily office, for Bridgettine liturgy seems to have served a number of interests for the many people involved in its foundation. Part of a Lancastrian initiative to promote a monastic ideal of prayer, it has been suggested that Syon's foundation provided a visible venue of public worship as a sign of pietistic royal patronage, that it helped to solidify Lancastrian claims to the monarchic lineage – both as an institution sustained by continual Lancastrian support and in the liturgical commendations that celebrated the deceased souls of a distinctly Lancastrian line of descent – that Bridget provided an outstanding model of specifically noble feminine piety, and that it provided a clear example of orthodox forms of worship in the struggle against lollardy.⁴⁹ Even this all too brief list suggests the wide range of issues to which liturgy could be

⁴⁸ Bridget's and Hildegard's experience do, however, differ greatly in the amount of agency imputed to them. Hildegard's earlier liturgical texts formed part of the final vision of her *Scivias* (pp. 525–529), but then gained an autonomous existence as the *Symphonia*, in which they are not explicitly attributed to divine agency. See B. Newman's introduction to her translation of the *Symphonia* (second edition; Ithaca, 1998), pp. 6–11, for information on the dates and circumstances of the text's composition. Bridget's contribution to the Bridgettine Rite was limited to the texts of the lessons to be read at matins, dictated to her by an angel. The lessons were translated into Latin and supplemented by the song that Bridget's divinely-inspired master provided. The account is told in: *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, pp. 16–21.

⁴⁹ This summary is drawn from: J. CATTO, "Religious change under Henry V", in: *Henry V: The Practice of Kingship*, ed. G.L. HARRISS (Oxford, 1985), pp. 97–116, pp. 110–111. C.A. GRISE, *Syon Abbey in Late-Medieval England: Gender and Reading, Bodies and Communities* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Western Ontario, 1998), pp. 29–43.

appropriated. Yet whatever the motives or functions of liturgical performance that stemmed from Syon's foundation were, they needed to be constructed around female performers.

As liturgical performers, the nuns of Syon were granted a surprising amount of authority. If the *Chastising*-author considered his audience of women religious to be more lay than cleric, the *Myroure*-author seems to have viewed the Syon nuns as clerical performers whose prayer had formal intercessory powers. As with the monks of St Swithun's, every syllable is important. The nuns are cautioned against the sins of "*faylyng or ouerskippnge of worde or sylable*",⁵⁰ a point that is brought home by the oft-told exemplum of the Titivillus, a demon whom, in this version, a Cistercian Abbot observed stalking the choir during the office, collecting the mispronounced syllables of the lazy monks.⁵¹ When the Abbot asks him what he is doing, the demon replies,

I muste eche day ... brynge my master a thousande pokes full of faylynges, & of neglygences in syllables and wordes, that ar done in youre order in redyng and in syngyng & else I must be sore beten.

These syllables, we are told, will be kept "*full bysely in sure store to accuse the soule therwith at our lordes dome*".⁵² Each of the nun's syllables are thus accorded a quantifiable value in omission, for which they will be held accountable. The use of this version of the exemplum is even more striking when set in contrast to an equally widespread 'lay' version, in which Titivillus haunts the pews during mass rather than the choir during the office, and is spied copying the gossipy conversation of two overly garrulous women onto a strip of parchment.⁵³ In the lay version, the scandal lies in the idea that unauthorized speech associated with women might be committed to writing; by bringing the clerical version to bear upon the nuns' singing and reading, the writer of the *Myroure* authorizes this performance as definitively clerical.

Unlike the monks of St Swithun's, however, this syllabic expectation is not related to grammatical knowledge. The *Myroure*-author, in fact, makes his assessment of the nuns' literacy the primary motive for his translation:

⁵⁰ *Myroure*, p. 53

⁵¹ See: M. JENNINGS, "Titivillus: the literary career of the recording demon", *Studies in Philology Texts and Studies* 74 (1977), no. 5.

⁵² *Myroure*, p. 54.

⁵³ See: JENNINGS, "Titivillus", p. 26, for this version.

Forasmoche as many of you, though ye can synge and rede, yet ye can not se what the meanynge therof ys : therefore to the onely worshyp and praysyng of oure lorde Iesu chryste and of hys moste mercyfull mother oure lady and to the gostly comforte and profyte of youre soules I haue drawn youre legende and all youre seruyce in to Englyshe, that ye shulde se by the vnderstandyng therof, how worthy and holy praysynge of oure glorious Lady is contente therin, & the more deuotely and knowyngly synge yt & rede yt and say yt to her worshyp.⁵⁴

Understanding is to be provided by translation, not by grammar which, one assumes, he imagines to be beyond their capabilities or an unnecessary amount of labour given the limited area of literate activity in which such knowledge would be deployed. He does, however, acknowledge their liturgical literacy, which is here implicitly defined as the skill of phonetic, and perhaps musical, decoding – the ability to “*synge and rede*”. Yet acknowledging reading and singing as a discrete skill, distinguishable from grammar causes the *Myroure*-author to perceive the Syon nuns as embodying a disjunction between word and meaning, a disjunction he figures as existing between inner and outer:

How shall ye then condewly shew by outwarde praysyng the excellent hyghnes and worthynes of the moste blyssed heuenly quene ... but yf ye haue fyrste syght therof by inwarde vnderstandinge.⁵⁵

Translation, he states, will supply some of this inner understanding; he additionally promises exposition of phrases that remain obscure even when set in English, as well as an explanation of the formal features of the liturgy and their functions, thereby articulating precisely the appropriate areas of clerical knowledge that might create a measure of commensurability between inner and outer. The idea that such disjunction might exist, of course, was not particular to women. As we have seen, Wykeham showed signs of the same anxiety in his search for audible, external indicators of his monks' spiritual state. But while Wykeham could draw upon a holistic notion of grammar to restore a sense of wholeness to liturgical performance, the *Myroure*-author's task, in the absence of grammar required him to be more inventive and self-conscious about the terms and purpose of this wholeness.

The association of the feminine with the “*preuy deuotions*” that the *Chastising*, among other texts, set in opposition to the liturgical placed Syon's performances in a unique position. Setting women's performance within the realm of clerical authority provided the *Myroure*-author with the opportunity to re-

⁵⁴ *Myroure*, pp. 2-3.

⁵⁵ *Myroure*, p. 2.

constitute a monastic ideal of consonance and continuity between devotion and liturgy.⁵⁶ It first, however, required that the nun's devotional interiority be controlled as modulated in accordance with this outward verbal praise. Among the requirements that pertain to the proper performance of the services, the *Myroure* describes the necessity of "*besy entendaunce*", and goes on to list four kinds of "*entendaunce*" which the nuns should consider: 1) attending to the words without understanding; 2) attending to the "*lytterall*" understanding; 3) attending to the "*inwarde gostly*" understanding; and 4) attending to exactness in execution, "*wythout errooure, or ouerskypynge, or other defaulte*".⁵⁷ None of these – even the fourth, which (in contradistinction to Wykeham's grammatical strictures) is easiest to maintain – requires grammatical training. Some do not even require understanding: the first and the fourth elements of the list, in which understanding is unnecessary, frame the inner two, placing the understanding that is required for these inner elements firmly within the context of liturgical literacy. Only in such a performative context might understanding be a prerequisite to attentiveness rather than the converse. And it is as a prerequisite rather than as *telos* that the *Myroure*-author is able to elaborate the means by which he will provide understanding (and even the "*inwarde gostly*" understanding that marked visionary experience in the *Chastising*) in the form of translation and limited exposition. Such detailed enumeration of finite possibilities serves to constrain the wayward devotional will that desires to understand; vernacular translation arguably only furthers this constraint by providing scripted understanding rather than linguistic competence. To constrain, however, is not to negate, for "*entendaunce*" ultimately serves to bring the devotional and the liturgical into agreement. While the topic is introduced in terms of prayer's liturgical impact on God, stating that "*god lyste not to here his prayer that hereth not hymselfe*", the various modes of "*entendaunce*" are assessed in devotional terms, as the writer points out the extent to which each yields "*good sauoure and deuocyon*".⁵⁸

⁵⁶ CATTO, "Religious change", p. 110, speaks of the "vital relation between public worship and private devotion". While there are a number of factors that make this an issue especially in early fifteenth-century England, a more extensive treatment than I can give here would consider the reaction against commodification of the liturgy in practices associated with the chantry. That such a reaction might emanate from royal authority suggests that Henry V at some level saw that the maintenance of liturgy within a gift economy served royal interests in the model it provided for the circulation of power and authority.

⁵⁷ *Myroure*, pp. 49–51.

⁵⁸ *Myroure*, p. 49.

Despite its promise to provide an extra-grammatical, institutionally-grounded form of understanding as a way to create meaningful public worship, the attainment of understanding may well have worked at cross purposes with this unifying intent. Those nuns who sought the highest form of “*entendaunce*” – the development of “*inwarde gostly*” understanding – did indeed have an arduous task before them, for although the translation might allow them to learn the meaning of each word of the service, they were not allowed to use the translation during the service to follow along, since this would disrupt their performance of the Latin text. Informed performance would thus involve enunciating the Latin text while simultaneously recalling the English translation. No matter how well the nuns who followed this path might know their services, their performances would never be fully latinized, but would always involve a split consciousness: the maintenance of both a liturgical latinity and a vernacular interiority. To the writer of the *Myroure of Oure Ladye*, such a performance might represent the best of both worlds – an ideal marriage of devotional and ritual for both men and women – but development and maintenance of such double awareness as a way of controlling devotional interiority may ultimately have engendered unexpected notions of liturgical participation.

While much must remain speculative, the examples of Hildegard and Bridget show that women whose interactions with the sacred texts were constructed outside of grammatical understanding, found ways to achieve forms of understanding that circumvented grammar. The *Myroure*, in fact, provides the means for such textual interaction by encouraging nuns to cultivate a vernacular interior that, while it is linked to the words, is also distinct from them. The cultivation of this space may account for the popularity of texts like Mechtilde of Hackeborn’s *Booke of Gostlye Grace*, a series of visions collected by the companions of the late thirteenth-century Helfta mystic, most of which Mechtilde experienced during liturgical performance.⁵⁹ Arranged according to the liturgical calendar, Mechtilde’s visions often involve Christ, Mary, and the saints participating in the very parts of the liturgy most strongly associated with men, such as the eucharist and the reading of the gospel, yet they also engage in singing and exposition, as in her vision at matins on the Feast of All Saints, during which Christ himself sings the antiphon “*Laudem dicite*”, then goes on to explicate it, to give Mechtilde “*inwarde felynge and clere vnderstondynge of these wordes*”, to give just one example.⁶⁰ “*Domna cantrix*” and schoolmaster

⁵⁹ *The Booke of Gostlye Grace of Mechtilde of Hackeborn*, ed. T. HALLIGAN (Toronto, 1979).

⁶⁰ *Booke of Gostlye Grace*, pp. 77-78.

of the convent at Helfta, Mechtild was no stranger to grammatical literacy.⁶¹ The “*clere vnderstondyng*” that Christ gives to her is a mystical supplement to that grammar, understanding “*aboue kynde*”, as the *Chastising*-author would call it. But the text, likely imported and disseminated by Carthusians and Bridgettines connected with Syon Abbey,⁶² was most widely read in its Middle English translation, which presented its readers with supernatural exposition in the vernacular. It thus exemplified the possibility of verbal explication without the grammatical knowledge that male clerics so forcefully sought to control. Studies like those of David Bell have provided evidence that grammatical instruction was more prevalent in nunneries than has previously been believed, which only attests to the ideological nature of male clerical constructions of women’s literacy.⁶³ But the grammatical competencies they may have possessed did not necessarily determine how they used them, or that their goals and desires in reading were the same as those of men. Liturgical literacy may in fact have provided women with a less restrictive site in which they might examine their own spiritual relations to their textual communities.

⁶¹ HALLIGAN, *Booke of Gostlye Grace*, pp. 36-37.

⁶² R. VOADEN, “The company she keeps: Mechtild of Hackeborn in late-medieval devotional compilations”, in: *Prophets Abroad: The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late-Medieval England*, ed. R. VOADEN (Woodbridge, 1996), pp. 51-69, pp. 65-69.

⁶³ BELL, *What Nuns Read*, pp. 57-79.

The Women Readers in Langland's Earliest Audience: Some Codicological Evidence¹

KATHRYN KERBY-FULTON

Modern scholars like to assume that we know what kind of medieval readers read *Piers Plowman*, and there have been several superb articles that attempt to generalize, and helpfully, on this subject. We have long been accustomed to think of the poem's audience as a mixture of ecclesiastical and gentry readers, working in areas of administration, legal counsel, education, and pastoral care, all concerned, in Anne Middleton's now classic formulation, with the meeting point of "spiritual and temporal governance".² But the anxiety to generalize has also created some blindspots. No one ever imagines, for instance, that women read *Piers Plowman*, but they did. The manuscripts provide the evidence, but it has gone unnoticed because no one expected to find such a thing. That *Piers Plowman* was being read among a variety of groups we now think of as somehow marginalized, however, has slowly become more apparent. The readers associated with the Rising of 1381,

¹ Manuscript Studies has come a long way since the first York Manuscript Studies Conference, held when I was still a postgraduate student at York. I am delighted to offer this paper on the manuscript evidence for Langland's earliest female readers as a tribute to the Centre for Medieval Studies, and in gratitude for the support and guidance of Derek Pearsall (and, for too short a time, the late Elizabeth Salter) when I, too, was an early female reader of Langland.

² See especially: A. MIDDLETON, "The audience and public of *Piers Plowman*", in: *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and its Literary Background*, ed. D. LAWTON (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 103-123, p. 104. A.I. DOYLE, "Remarks on Surviving Manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*", *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: Essays in Honour of G.H. Russell* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 35-48.

and the fragmentary evidence for Lollard readership, are perhaps the most obvious, and sensational, instances, but by no means the only ones.³ In Anglo-Ireland, for example, it became a vehicle for the expression of emergent colonialism – reshaped as such, from what we can tell, by a handful of professional readers and translators in the Lancastrian colonial civil service.⁴ This essay will explore another such unthought of audience: his female readers.

Clearly Langland was reaching a very wide audience, and reaching them, in some instances, with thoughts they were unaccustomed to read. Lay readers, for example, were often fed ‘watered down’ or patronizingly bowdlerized or otherwise ‘adapted’ texts.⁵ Civil service readers, with more access to material in original languages, were accustomed to the transmission of strong satire within professional circles, but not *outside* of them.⁶ Members of religious houses, who perhaps had the most freedom to collect and retain daring or satirical materials of one sort or another, were nonetheless not much used to collecting them in the vernacular.⁷ *Piers* must have seemed a startling vernacular text even to the men in these groups, but it was members of these groups who, traditionally, had played important roles in the transmission of texts of all kinds to women.⁸

Piers brought to women a kind of reading most were not doing before. It brought, in fact, a new kind of politically and ecclesiastically controversial reading. It has perhaps not been thought of as a women’s text partly because it

³ For the former, see: S. JUSTICE, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley, 1994). For the latter: A. HUDSON, *The Premature Reformation* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 398–408.

⁴ K. KERBY-FULTON and D. DESPRES, *Iconography and the Professional Reader: the Politics of Book Production in the Douce Piers Plowman* (Minneapolis, 1999), pp. 92–94. K. KERBY-FULTON and S. JUSTICE, “Langlandian reading circles and the civil service in London and Dublin”, *New Medieval Literatures* 1 (1997), pp. 59–83.

⁵ N. WATSON, “Conceptions of the word: The mother tongue and the incarnation of God”, *New Medieval Literatures* 1 (1997), pp. 85–124.

⁶ K. KERBY-FULTON and S. JUSTICE, “Reformist intellectual culture in the English and Irish civil service: The *Modus tenendi parliamentum* and its literary relations”, *Traditio* 53 (1998), pp. 149–202, pp. 178–190.

⁷ A.G. RIGG, *A Glastonbury Miscellany of the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford, 1968), p. 31.

⁸ For instances of the role of civil servants in commissioning vernacular literature for nunneries, see: D. BELL, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries* (Kalamazoo, 1995), pp. 132–133. For the role of monastic houses, especially the Carthusians, in promoting texts, such as the *Book of Margery Kempe*, for a female audience, see: K. PARSONS, “The Red Ink Annotator of *The Book of Margery Kempe* and his audience”, in: *The Medieval Professional Reader at Work*, ed. K. KERBY-FULTON and M. HILMO (Victoria, 2001), pp. 143–216. For the instance of a husband and wife team of *Piers* readers, see the discussion of Digby 145 below.

does not make use of the kind of affective devotion long associated with female reading, texts like those Richard Rolle wrote for women, or Aelred of Rievaulx's *De institutione inclusarum*. But it is in the company of Rolle and Aelred, and similar texts written or adapted explicitly for women that we find *Piers Plowman* in the Vernon manuscript, a book which A.I. Doyle and others have speculated was prepared for a nunnery.⁹ But no one seems to know what to make of *Piers Plowman* in this context – even Felicity Riddy, who makes a strong and convincing case for the manuscript's being destined for a female readership, seems faintly baffled by the presence of the poem in Vernon (she explains it only by reference to the fact that the A version has the least Latin of any of the versions).¹⁰ But in fact six *Piers* manuscripts contain either women's signatures or the names of women owners or readers: Liverpool University, Chaderton F.4.8, the Duke of Westminster's MS, Eaton Hall, Cambridge University Library Dd. 1.17, San Marino, Huntington Library, HM 128, Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College 669/646 and Bodleian Library, Oxford, Digby 145. If we tentatively add to this list the Vernon MS (Bodleian Library, Eng. Poet.a.1), we have seven, and given how little we know about the readership, ownership, provenance of most *Piers* manuscripts, this is striking.¹¹

Cambridge University Library Dd.1.17 is probably the most disappointing to the enterprising feminist scholar: the name Jane Stafford is scrawled in faint and apparently childish drypoint several times down one of its huge Latin-covered pages.¹² If this is an indication of female literacy, it may belong to nursery studies (where, for now, we'll leave it).¹³ More promising is Caius

⁹ A.I. DOYLE, *The Vernon Manuscript: A Facsimile of Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Eng. Poet. a.1* (Cambridge, 1987). See also: N.F. BLAKE, "The Vernon manuscript: contents and organization", in: *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, ed. D. PEARSALL (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 54-59, p. 58. F. RIDDY, "'Women talking about the things of God': a late medieval sub-culture?", in: *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 104-127, pp. 106-107 (for a listing of the contents that seem especially applicable to women, see p. 106).

¹⁰ F. RIDDY, "Women talking about the things of God", pp. 106-107.

¹¹ For initial descriptions of the manuscripts, I have been indebted to M.-C. Uhart's unpublished 1986 dissertation from the University of Leicester, *The Early Reception of Piers Plowman*. Uhart's work now forms the basis of: C.D. BENSON and L. BLANCHFIELD, *The Manuscripts of Piers Plowman: the B Version* (Cambridge, 1997).

¹² See folio 96v, where the name "Jane Staford" appears once, and "Jane Stafford" twice, scrawled precariously down the margin of the "Liber Septimus" of the *Historia de gestis Britonum*. Even though this is in the first section of the manuscript and *Piers Plowman* is in the third, the system of rubrication and running heads show that the sections were joined in the fifteenth-century when Jane Stafford wrote on it. For a description of C.U.L. Dd.1.17, see: BENSON and BLANCHFIELD, *Manuscripts of Piers Plowman*, pp. 33-38.

¹³ The hand may belong to Lady Jane Stafford née Spencer, of Althorp, Northants, whose

669/646, originally a Shirley MS, and containing many of his signed notas, copied for him by John Cok.¹⁴ The contents of the manuscript give us an immediate clue as to why the names “*Mestrys Clapam & Joy Clapam*” might appear on the flyleaf in a late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century hand: its Pseudo-Bonaventure and Richard Rolle were considered optimal reading for women, and this book may have had a partially female audience even in John Shirley’s own time. Chaderton F.4.8 and the Duke of Westminster’s MS (the latter written in a government hand, as Doyle has pointed out),¹⁵ contain early sixteenth century women’s names: “*Isabel Poniell*” and “*Margrett Littler*” respectively. Both names appear a little ways into the texts of *Piers Plowman*, which are, in both cases, the only contents of the manuscript – so if these women were reading anything, it must have been *Piers Plowman*. HM 128 presents a more complex problem. On folio 144v the name “*Cysley*” appears in a fifteenth-century hand, on folio 153, the name “*Maude*” and on folio 149, “*betoun brygges*”, both in the same hand, also of the fifteenth century. All names occur part way into the (complete) text of *Piers*. This complex manuscript is copied in five hands and contains both material such as a priest would use (commentaries on liturgical sequences), and copies of vernacular texts like the *Prick of Conscience*, the *Siege of Jerusalem* and *How the Good Wife Taught her Daughter*.¹⁶ Felicity Riddy, studying the manuscript along with other manuscripts of the *Good Wife*, concludes that it was not a women’s book, but used as part of a priest’s pastoral repertoire.¹⁷ But the presence of the women’s names suggests that at some point in the fifteenth century the collection was either on loan to laity (and lay women) or had found its way into the hands of lay owners – perhaps even by the means that a London priest, William Palme-

will of 1551 survives (see BENSON and BLANCHFIELD, *Manuscripts of Piers Plowman*, p. 38). If so, this would suggest that she was very young when she wrote her name in the manuscript. On manuscripts being used for the purposes of practical literacy (that is, as copy-texts or even scrap paper for children in a household), see: C. Grindley’s interesting comments in his paper, “Some evidence of practical literacy in the sixteenth century”, delivered at the 34th Annual Medieval Congress, Western Michigan University, May 6-9, 1999.

¹⁴ KERBY-FULTON, “Professional reader as annotator”, in: KERBY-FULTON and DESPRES, *Iconography*, chapter 3, p. 74.

¹⁵ DOYLE, “Remarks”, p. 40. For descriptions of these two manuscripts, see: *Piers Plowman: the A Version*, ed. G. KANE (London, 1960), p. 2 and p. 18 respectively.

¹⁶ See the description in: C.W. DUTSCHKE, *Guide to the Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Huntington Library* 1 (San Marino, 1989).

¹⁷ F. RIDDY, “Mother knows best: reading social change in a courtesy text”, *Speculum* 71 (1996), p. 66.

re, bequeathed his own *Piers* manuscript to a woman, Agnes Eggesfield, in 1400.¹⁸

Archbishop Arundel's conservative reform project, as Nicholas Watson argues, made the kinds of works usually thought of as women's reading – like Love's *Mirror* – both a means of education in the vernacular, but also “a bastion against such education”. The attitude of the conservative side of the Oxford translation debates (on the pros and cons of biblical translation) is nicely summarized in the pseudo-Dionysian metaphor used by William Butler at the time: “the passive illumination given to Christians of a lower order should depend utterly on the wills of Christians of higher order”.¹⁹ This ‘passivity’ of illumination was especially rigorous in relation to women, and when one reads Continental women's texts, for instance, in their original languages, and then compares the bowdlerized Middle English versions of the same texts put before women, one has to agree that women too often got the short end of the stick. But it is not this simple: the steady decline in Latin learning in the nunneries has been well documented, and it was this very decline which gave a great boost to writing in the vernacular. Women's thirst for devotional material especially brought much into the vernacular we would not now have – as any perusal of David Bell's catalogue of the libraries of English nunneries will suggest. To what extent, one wonders – and this is an audacious question – did it bring *Piers Plowman* into existence? Against Watson's view must be set Bell's astute observation that “as a consequence, therefore, of what most men would have seen as their limitations, the spiritual and devotional life of the English nuns could have been richer, fuller, and, one might say, more up to date than that of their more numerous brethren, who, for the most part, were still mired in the consequences of a conservative and traditional education”.²⁰ Bell's list of what survives in Latin, French and English is revealing: with so many original works in Middle English to choose from, nuns' libraries had an advantage in many respects – as did lay women with access to libraries like those of the great charterhouses (the manuscript of *The Book of Margery Kempe*, for instance, was likely a copy on loan to laity at Mt Grace Priory).²¹ But most striking is that his list of Latin works could practically be a list of sources for *Piers Plowman*. Nuns' libraries, in fact, held everything one would need to write

¹⁸ See: R.A. WOOD, “A fourteenth-century owner of *Piers Plowman*”, *Medium Aevum* 53 (1984), pp. 83-90.

¹⁹ WATSON, “Conceptions”, p. 96.

²⁰ BELL, *What Nuns Read*, p. 77.

²¹ PARSONS, “Red Ink Annotator”.

Piers Plowman, from the *vitae sanctorum* to the standard compendia by writers like Peter Comestor or Honorius of Autun to the popular pseudonymous works attributed to Augustine, Bernard and Hugh of St Victor. Most importantly, the list reveals the exact same paucity of classical writers as we see in Langland's poem. In English nunneries "classical writers are represented [only by] ... the pseudonymous *Disticha Catonis* in Latin and English", as Bell observes.

Now, I'm not suggesting that Langland wrote his poem in a nunnery library, but rather that Langland's supposed aversion to the classics may be no more than what he thought appropriate to a *mixed* audience that included a good many women. Langland's sensitivity to women's issues is, in fact, rather striking. It has not been much noticed, for instance, that he seems to know Continental visionary women's writings (such as Mechtild of Hackeborn's),²² and that the lists of extant manuscripts held by the charterhouses, and apparently used for pastoral work by them, provide intriguing parallels with his thought (one thinks especially of their dissemination of Middle English translations of Mechtild and beguine writers like Marguerite Porete and of the *Chastizing of God's Children*, which takes up so many of the visionary issues that worry Langland).²³ He may to some extent have that sort of audience in mind. More pragmatically, he portrays himself (within the C text at least) as actively ministering to women as well as men, visiting "*now with hym, now with here*".²⁴ Whether this is autobiographical or not, we do not know, but in any event, much in *Piers Plowman* is of relevance to secular women, especially on marriage, and especially in the C text, which contains surely the first ever passage in English poetry on the grinding life of poor women cottagers (apparently single-parent heads of households, a passage which suggests real social experience, and not mere literary convention).²⁵

But we should not be too quick to assume that these were the only kinds of topics that interested women readers. Fortunately, we are not left entirely to our own speculations on this. The *Piers* manuscript, Digby 145, is annotated by a husband and wife team, Sir Adrian (1476?-1539) and Lady Anne Fortescue. It is dated 1532, altered from 1531 by overwriting in the *ex libris*, which tells us that Adrian copied it in his own hand. His mother was the daughter of Sir Geoffrey Boleyn, and was the great-aunt to Queen Anne Boleyn, a connection

²² K. KERBY-FULTON, "Piers Plowman", in: *Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. D. WALLACE (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 535-536.

²³ N.R. KER, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain* (London, 1964), pp. 122-123.

²⁴ C version, V, ll. 51. Citations to the A text refer to: *Piers Plowman: the A Version*. To the C text: *Piers Plowman: An Edition of the C-Text*, ed. D. PEARSALL (London, 1978).

²⁵ C version, IX, ll. 70-87.

which probably brought him favour for a time at the court of Henry VIII. In 1539, however, Adrian was executed under Henry VIII for "*sundry treasons*", the details of which are not clear.²⁶ In this homemade copy of the poem (which is not even rubricated) we have, certainly, lay readers of *Piers Plowman*. What is striking about Anne's annotations is that she most certainly understands Latin. Also striking is the extent to which she chooses many passages for highlighting that we might not think of as 'women's passages'; in fact, she annotates much as professional readers do.²⁷ In the accompanying figures, and transcribed in the Appendix below, one can see the passages we know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that she highlighted with her own personal manicule. Two of these she has signed: ".1532. *manu domine Anne F.*"; the other three are marked by the same manicule – it differs distinctively from the two other kinds of manicules in the manuscript (which I assume belong to Adrian, and the unknown later annotator who also supplies notes). Anne's manicules all have three distinctive components: dimples, ruffles and nails – and they are all done in the same ink. There are also literally hundreds of handwritten annotations in the manuscript, most, one assumes, by Adrian, but some probably by Anne – and some by a third annotator, as this delightful instance suggests: beside the dreamer's lament that he has become impotent, and that his wife had "*ruthe*" (pity), an annotation (likely, though we cannot be sure) in the hand of Adrian writes, "*nota þe wyfe*", after which a later annotator adds, "*ye but nota for what cause/ the wief is wo*".²⁸ The sample of Anne's signed handwriting (essentially what can be seen in figures 1 and 2) is too small to be certain of identifying her hand in other annotations, though she has a rather distinctive open-compartment "a" (top half) and an open "e". On the basis of this one can arrive at a secondary set of handwritten annotations that could, with some plausibility, be assigned to her (they chiefly notice passages on marriage, and on friars – of all things).²⁹ But sorting out their respective hands is made even more uncertain by the complexity of ink colours in the marginalia (like many medieval annotators of *Piers Plowman*, professional or private, the Fortescues seem to have gone

²⁶ *Dictionary of National Biography*, vii, pp. 476-477. See also: T. TURVILLE-PETRE, "Sir Adrian Fortescue and his copy of *Piers Plowman*", *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 14 (2000), pp. 29-48, an excellent study which does not, however, mention Anne's role as annotator.

²⁷ See: KERBY-FULTON, "Professional reader as annotator".

²⁸ Digby 145, fol. 126. Commenting on C version, XXII, l. 193.

²⁹ Here is a selection of annotations likely to be Anne's in, for instance, X and XII: 48v / X, l. 131: *wedlock*; l. 139: *nota bastardye*; 49v, X, l. 186: *nota mariage*; 58v / XII, l. 44: *manicule* (see Appendix below); 60v / XII, l. 143: *a walnot*.

back over and over the manuscript at different sittings),³⁰ so I have thought it safer in what follows to work primarily with the notes marked by Anne's distinctive manicule. The most striking thing about the two signed annotations is that they are in Latin. It might seem odd, and amateurish, to sign and date an annotation – in fact, it is very professional: in the fifteenth century, both Cok and Shirley often sign their annotations (in Latin), and Anne may be imitating something she's seen.³¹ Moreover both she and Adrian seem very proud of their scribal work, since her signatures are very like the statement of Adrian's *ex libris* that he wrote the book "*sua manu propria*". In fact, one of the passages Anne highlights concerns Langland's own husband and wife team of intellectuals, Dame Study and her husband, Wit, and notes, perhaps comically in this context, the moment when Study silences her husband:³²

And whan that witte was aware / how hys wyffe tolde
He become so confuse he could not mele
And as dome as a dore nayle ...³³

One of her manicules highlights a Latin quote from the gospels, "*Qui vos spernit me spernit*";³⁴ one highlights the Latin names of *Liberum arbitrium* (a passage which the professional, John Cok, extracted for the Caius manuscript, also, as we know, associated with women). The fact that this is hardly a topic modern scholars would think of in relation to women is very instructive – and is a warning against the modern temptation toward patronizing and essentializing in the study of women's cultural history. One of Anne's notes highlights Christ's voluntary taking on of human neediness³⁵ and suggests, like her highlighting of "*Qui vos spernit me spernit*",³⁶ that Anne was concerned with poverty issues, and perhaps even ecclesiastical poverty polemics surrounding the friars.³⁷

On folio 58r, however, she highlights another strong female personification at work, and one of the most controversial passages in the poem, in which

³⁰ See: KERBY-FULTON and DESPRES, *Iconography*, Appendix 1.

³¹ On Cok and Shirley as professional readers, see: KERBY-FULTON, "Professional reader as annotator", pp. 72-75.

³² Note that she puts a bracket beside these lines, as she does on fol. 123v, the other signed annotation. See figures 1 and 2.

³³ Digby 145, fol. 52. Compare: A version, XI, ll. 93-95.

³⁴ Digby 145, fol. 29r. C version, VII, l. 101a, quoting Luke 10: 16.

³⁵ Digby 145, fol. 123v. C version, XVII, ll. 40-41. See Appendix.

³⁶ Digby 145, fol. 29r. C version, VII, l. 101a.

³⁷ See note 26.

Scripture (a female figure in Langland), jumps 'on high' and preaches. The passage deserves citation in full:

A saith soth, quod Scripture tho, and skyppe an heyh and prechede.
 Ac þe matere þat she meuede, if lewede men hit knewe,
 The lasse, as y leue, louyon þey wolde
 The bileue of our lord þat lettred men techeth.
 Of here teme and here tales y took ful good hede;
 She saide in here sarmon selcouthe wordes:
Multi to a mangerye and to þe mete were sompned
 And whan þe peple was plenere ycome þe porter vnpynned þe gate
 And plithe in *pauci* priueiliche and lette þe remenaunt go rome.
 Al for tene of here tyxst tremeblede myn herte
 And in a wer gan y wex and with mysulue to despute
 Where y were chose or not chose; on Holy Church y thouhte
 That vnderfeng me at þe fonte for on of godes chosene.
 For Crist clepede vs alle, come yf we wolde,
 Sarrasynes and sismatikes, and so a ded þe Iewes,
 And bad hem souke for synne sauete at his breste
 And drynke bote for bale, brouke hit ho-so myhte.
*O vos omnes sicientes, venite ad aquas.*³⁸

Here, in lines covered by only the barest figleaf of Latin, Scripture says boldly that although all are invited to the feast of Christianity, the choosing of the elect will be disturbingly arbitrary. The lines are prefaced by the dreamer's comment on Scripture's sermon (ll. 40-42):

Ac þe matere þat she meuede, if lewede men hit knewe,
 The lasse, as y leue, louyon þey wolde
 The bileue of our lord þat lettred men techeth

But, he says, of the theme of her "*selcouthe*" sermon, he took very good heed – at just this point Anne's manicule appears. Four lines after her manicule, the dreamer is thrown into a state of panic, and eight lines later we get Langland's one, rare use of the "Jesus as Mother" topos,³⁹ used, if anything could in *Piers Plowman*, to resolve the tension between Church and probing conscience that motivates the whole poem. This is an appeal, over the heads of the learned and their laws, to the iconography of Jesus as mother:

³⁸ C version, XII, ll. 39-55a, quoting Isa 55: 1.

³⁹ C. WALKER BYNUM, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1982).

For Christ called us all to come if we would, Saracens and schismatics, and so he did the Jews, and bad them suck salvation from his breast ... "*O vos omnes sitientes, uenite ad aquas*" ("O all you that thirst, come to the waters").

The passage is a powerful one – it terrified staid professional readers like the annotator of HM 143, while it excited the more adventurous, like the Anglo-Irish annotator of Douce.⁴⁰ Read from a woman's standpoint (and I confess, until working with Anne's annotation, I never stopped to think of this), the passage is full of imagery of female power: a female personification preaching, a devastating critique of the elitism of clerical teaching, and the resolution of all – indeed – world problems through a powerful image of the feminization of Christ. How would this compare with the kind of reading women of the period usually did?

Speaking of the importance of the famously affective work of Nicholas Love in reaching the laity (and especially women), in relation to Lollardy, Watson writes: "Where Lollard theology insisted on what Reformation polemic would call the 'priesthood of all believers' ... Love ... assumes that his clerical status is sufficient to mark his authority over his audience. From the viewpoint of this notional audience, his voice is that of the Church, ... and so is close to being the voice of God."⁴¹ While this may be true of Nicholas Love, it is certainly not true of Langland, and this is precisely what made the reading of *Piers Plowman* so empowering for women, indeed, for lay readers, and for any with dissatisfactions within the Church. If we go back now to the contents of the Vernon manuscript, we see *Piers Plowman* in the context of more such empowering texts – empowering, that is, in the way that being exposed to critique of an institution that has power over one can be empowering. So, too, among the contents of Vernon, *Ancrene Riwe* minces no words in its pragmatic critique of clerical sexual misconduct. And the *Pistel of Susan* shows a just woman triumphing over corrupt church elders – justices, in fact, who contravene justice. But Langland's text was even newer, and more critical, and more radical than these – and the earliest women readers of the poem must have realized this. Together with the poem's unusual sensitivity to female issues, such as poor women heads of households, the pastoral care of women, marital and sexual issues, and powerful female personifications, what must have struck early women readers of the poem most was not only the number of 'strong' female speakers, but their ability, time and again, to stun and silence

⁴⁰ KERBY-FULTON, "Professional reader as annotator", p. 83.

⁴¹ WATSON, "Conceptions", p. 96.

their male interlocutors and audiences – and cause not only anger and doubt, but serious soul-searching as well. Certainly we know these passages struck Anne Fortescue.

Langland's female personifications are, of course, allegorical, but the ease and naturalism with which he casts them in strong performative, even, pulpit roles (as in Scripture's sermon), endowing them with unimpeachable authority, goes far beyond medieval allegorical convention – and Anne Fortescue is unlikely to have been the only one of his female readers who noticed. As more work on the *Piers Plowman* annotations, reception history, and on codicology of the manuscripts continues, we can only hope to be better able to say more about some of Langland's most elusive and neglected readers, the women in his audience.⁴²

⁴² I would like to thank Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Alison Gruseke for their insights and enthusiasm while this paper was in press.

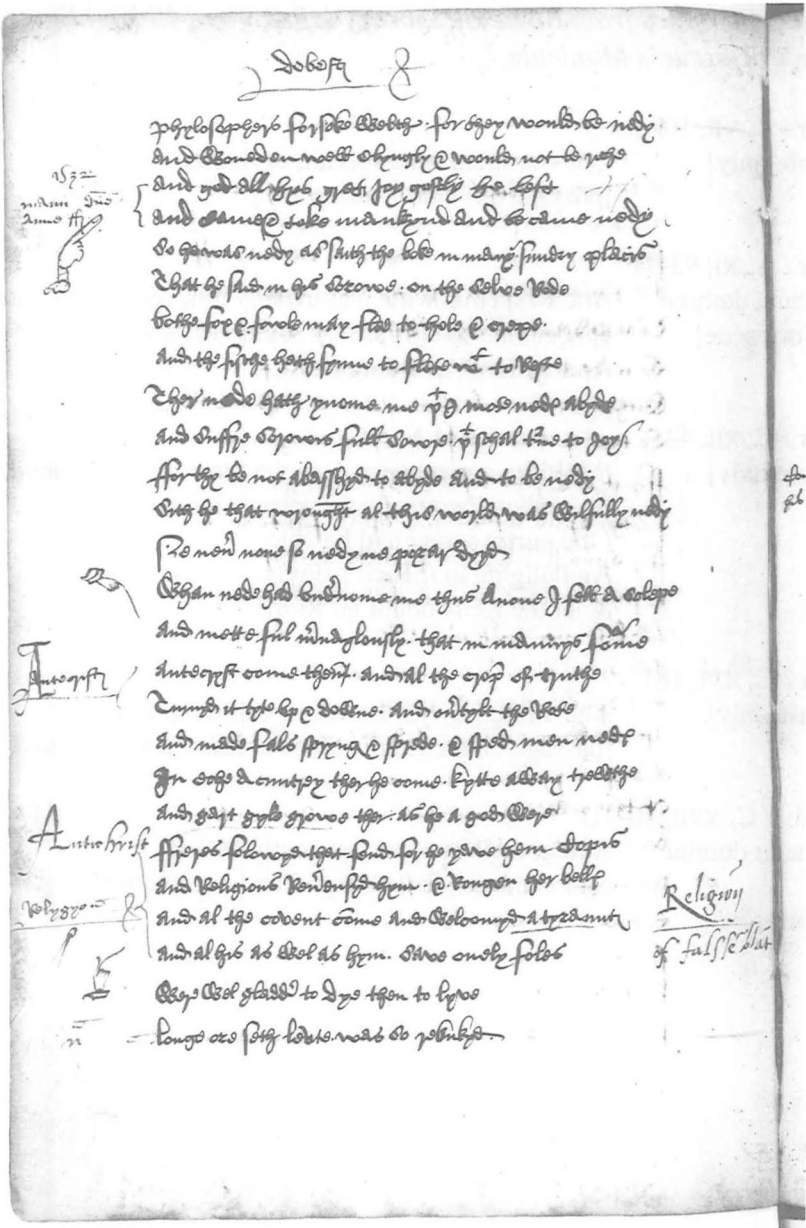


Figure 2: MS Oxford, Bodleian Library Digby 145, f. 123v, showing Lady Anne's second manicule signature, highlighting C, XVII, 40-41, concerning Christ's voluntary poverty.

*Appendix: Passages from Bodleian Library MS Digby 145 Highlighted
by Anne Fortescue's Manicule*

folio 29r / C, VII, 101a:

[**manicule** only] Qui vos spernit me spernit, et cetera.
[passage on 'God's minstrels']

folio 52r / A, XI, 93-94:

.1532. manu domine And whan that witte was aware / how hys wyffe tolde
Anne F[ortescue] He become so confuse he could not mele
And as dome as a dore nayle ...

folio 58r / C, XII, 44:

[**manicule** only] /Multi/ to a maungery & to the mete were sompnyd
And whan the people war plener icode
/ the porter vnpyynyed þe gate
And plighte in /pauci/ priuily
& let the Remenaunt go Rome

folio 81r / C, XVI, 181:

[**manicule** only] And while I qwyk the corps. callid am I *anima*
[passage on the Latin names of *Liberum arbitrium*]

folio 123v / C, XVII, 40-41:

.1532. manu domine And god all hys gret joy gostly he left
And came & toke mankynd and became nedy
Anne f[ortescue]

Learning to Be a Man, Learning to Be a Priest in Late Medieval England

P.H. CULLUM

The 'Learning' of the clergy is an area which has had a good deal of exploration, but while the learning that comes from books: literacy in quantity, quality and kind has been the focus of much attention, not least of this series of papers, there is another kind of learning which has received rather less attention. Most learning in the Middle Ages, both in childhood of roles and attitudes (those things which create both a socialised individual and a personal identity), and later on of a trade or occupation, was learning which was acquired informally by observation and imitation. Even among the clergy, that group which was by definition literate and learned, much of the way in which they learned both how to do the job, but also how to be a cleric, (in the sense of acquiring the behavioural and attitudinal markers that signalled both to the outer world and to clerics themselves that they formed a separate group from laymen), came from watching senior colleagues on the job.¹ Unlike laymen however, clergy, because they were at least in theory distinctively literate could acquire some of this instruction in written form, although it is difficult to know how much of this literature was in fact easily or willingly accessed.² It is

¹ P. Heath, *English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (London, 1969), p. 85. *Pastors and the Care of Souls in Medieval England*, ed. J. SHINNERS and W.J. DOHAR (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1998), pp. 36-37.

² HEATH, *English Parish Clergy*, pp. 86-90. P. MARSHALL, *The Catholic Priesthood* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 96-102. J.A.F. THOMSON, *Early Tudor Church and Society, 1485-1529* (London, 1993), pp. 144-147.

this topic, the social and textual inculcation of clerical identity, which will be addressed in this paper.

I am less concerned with the book-learnedness of the clergy therefore, their knowledge and ownership of books than with the acquisition of clerical identity, of which literacy was a marker, although an increasingly problematic one. In particular I want to explore the problems of acquiring a clerical identity in the century and a half after the Black Death; the extent to which it might have altered and the wider implications this might have had for lay society.

My interest in this issue was first raised when I wrote a paper on the clergy for a conference on masculinity in the Middle Ages and my concerns are still in large part shaped by the extent to which clerical identity was distinguished from lay male identity and how far that may have changed during the later middle ages.³ It is my contention that clerical identity was in large part, not just a status or occupational identity, but a gendered identity. From the twelfth century clerical identity was registered by a variety of signs which distinguished them from all other status or occupation groups. Literacy, particularly in the sacred language of Latin, was both an occupational necessity and a route to God. Celibacy cut clerics off from the usual preoccupation with family, and their unarmed state distinguished them from all other adult men. But clerical masculinity was also fragile. Rather than an unconscious product of social, economic and *mentale* circumstance, clerical masculinity had been a conscious ideological creation of the eleventh and twelfth centuries which had itself to be consciously learned in opposition to conventional lay masculinity.⁴ Partly a product of long tradition, it had also been formed by the particular ecclesiastical needs and circumstances of the day, especially the threat of heresy which required that a very high standard be set for priestly masculinity. Clerical, and particularly priestly masculinity, was a code designed to create an individual who was ritually pure in order to be able to perform the Mass, who was literate enough to be able to teach, who could be a shepherd and peacemaker to his flock, and whose purity of life was an implicit rebuke to that flock.⁵ It was thus also a masculinity which was both a critique of contemporary lay masculinity and also dependent upon it. Because the standard was set so high it also meant that the Church was constantly battling to enforce obedi-

³ P.H. CULLUM, "Clergy, masculinity and transgression in late medieval England", in: *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. D.M. HADLEY (Harlow, 1999), pp. 178-196.

⁴ R.N. SWANSON, "Angels incarnate: clergy and masculinity from Gregorian Reform to Reformation", in: *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, pp. 160-177, pp. 161-164. CULLUM, "Clergy, masculinity and transgression", pp. 179-180.

⁵ J. BOSSY, *Christianity in the West. 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 64-66.

ence, a struggle which was largely won, at least in form, by the mid-thirteenth century.⁶

By the middle of the fourteenth century the requirements for entry to the priesthood were well-established. A man had to be free-born, of married parents and with no physical impairments (although he could be dispensed from these requirements), unmarried, of good morals, sufficiently literate in Latin to be able to read and understand the liturgy, and with a title to benefice (meaning evidence that were he ordained he would have sufficient income that the Church would not have to support him). Once raised to major orders further expectations were placed upon him: he was to remain chaste, he was to go unarmed and to avoid the shedding of blood. These further expectations of celibacy and the avoidance of violence significantly distinguished the clerk from the layman, as fighting and fornication, or at least the potential for them, were intrinsic markers of normative masculinity.⁷

Around 1400 John Myrc, an Austin canon, and author of the *Manuale sacerdotis* or *Instructions for Parish Priests*, a handbook for priests, effectively summarised the professional, behavioural and moral requirements made of priests thus:

Preste, þy self thou moste be chast,
 And say þy serues wyþowten hast...
 Of honde & mowþe þou moste be trewe,
 And grete opyes thou moste enchewe,
 In worde and dede þou moste be mylde, ...
 Dronkelec and glotonye,
 Pruyde and slouþe and enue,
 Alle þow moste putten a-way ...
 That þe nedeth, ete and drynke,
 But sle þy lust for any thyng.
 Tauernes also thou moste for-sake,
 Wrastelynge, & schotyng, & such maner game,
 Thou myȝte not vse wythowte blame.
 Hawkyng, huntyng, and dawnsyng, ...
 Cutted clothes and pyked schone,
 Thy god fame þey wol for-done.

⁶ While HEATH, *English Parish Clergy*, pp. 104-108, saw the discipline of celibacy only slowly and partially imposed on the parish clergy, most recent writers have suggested that by the late medieval period there is little evidence for breach of clerical celibacy among the beneficed parochial clergy. MARSHALL, *The Catholic Priesthood*, pp. 144-145. THOMSON, *Early Tudor Church*, pp. 168-171.

⁷ V.L. BULLOUGH, "On being a male in the middle ages", in: *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, ed. C.A. LEES, (Minneapolis, 1994), p. 34.

Marketes and feyres I the for-bede ...
 In honeste clothes thow moste gon,
 Baselard ny bawdryke were þow non.⁸

Instruction manuals of this kind, designed to help parish priests do a better job, had been in circulation since the mid-thirteenth century. The increased numbers of these produced and copied after the mid-fourteenth century attest both to the concern of senior clergy for the continued education of the benefited in pastoral matters, and the demand amongst those with a cure of souls for this literature.⁹ But they may also signal an increased concern in the years after the Black Death on the part of both the higher levels of the Church and among the laity that clerical standards were falling.¹⁰ It is difficult to be certain how accurate the criticisms were, but another way to look at it would be to suggest that social and economic circumstances and the demands of the lay world were making it increasingly difficult or even irrelevant to achieve or even to aspire to the high standards of a distinctive clerical masculinity.

In order to examine how these challenges developed it is necessary first to consider the traditional means established in the thirteenth and earlier fourteenth centuries by which a young man set about acquiring the necessary edu-

⁸ John Myrc, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed. E. PEACOCK (1868, revised 1902: *EETS OS* 31), p. 2, ll. 23-48.

⁹ SHINNERS and DOHAR, *Pastors and Care of Souls*, p. 37 and pp. 122-125. J. HUGHES, *Pastors and Visionaries: Religion and Secular Life in late medieval Yorkshire* (Woodbridge, 1988), p. 135: "Near the start of Thoresby's archiepiscopate Islip wrote a letter to his fellow primate complaining about the wretched state of the church of England....Thoresby, in his reply, attempted to comfort his friend by signifying his intention to confront the problem. This he did by implementing a coherent programme of reform in the church of York and making provision for the education of clergy and laity."

¹⁰ That there was concern about the standards of the clergy expressed particularly in the last quarter of the fourteenth century is clear from a wide variety of commentators of whom Chaucer and Langland are the best known, however recent historians have generally painted a rather more favourable picture. HUGHES, *Pastors and Visionaries*, pp. 136-161, has argued that in the diocese of York Thoresby's close supervision of the clergy was concerned to reinforce the need for pastoral work and that he "restored confidence and a sense of purpose in the church of York" (p. 142). W.J. DOHAR, *The Black Death and Pastoral Leadership: the diocese of Hereford in the fourteenth century* (Philadelphia, 1995), p. 146: "(T)here is little reason to believe that learning for the cure of souls was badly threatened in late fourteenth-century Hereford.... But there was no apparent concession on the part of bishops of Hereford regarding the conditions of literacy and learning among clerical candidates; neither was there a suspicious rise in dispensations from the traditional impediments to the sacrament and ministry. Last, there was no clear evidence in the records that the post-plague influx of poorly qualified men to holy orders, reported by the canon of Leicester, much affected the churches west of the Severn".

cation, social and intellectual, to become a priest. The first step was probably a 'song school' where a boy with a good voice might learn much of the liturgy by heart, and also get a basic introduction to reading, and probably writing, mainly through rote learning of the psalter. Cathedrals and larger religious houses usually maintained song schools which provided a choir to support the liturgical round. In the countryside wealthier parishes might also have a song school as did some urban ones, although this probably depended in large part on the interest of the parish priest, or a chaplain who might use it to augment his income.¹¹ In York the Minster and St Leonard's hospital had these and also the more advanced grammar schools. St Mary's abbey boarded between thirty and fifty scholars attending St Peter's school.¹² Grammar schools provided an advanced Latin education, often based on the classics, including composition, which would allow the student not only to read but also to create texts: the necessary skill of both the teacher and the bureaucrat.¹³

The schools attached to religious houses or secular cathedrals made arrangements to allow boys and young men to lead a common life, separate from the lay world while they received an education. Most secular cathedrals had a house where choristers could live together by the fifteenth century, and most also provided the vicars-choral with either a common hall or close. A number also provided employment for choristers whose voices had broken and who were too young to take the orders which would allow them to progress to become vicars-choral, but only Lincoln provided them with a common hall.¹⁴ Elsewhere they may have boarded with other members of the cathedral clergy.¹⁵ Here one can find an environment which could have inculcated a clerical identity.

Although this provides a neat pattern of progression through a clerical education it may have been more common for boys or young men to enter a clerical household for training. In York it was common for the senior clergy of the Minster to provide an education within their own households. In 1335 Archbishop Melton placed two of his nephews with a York canon, William Yafford, and it is probable that St Peter's school itself originally grew out of

¹¹ HEATH, *English Parish Clergy*, pp. 84-85. SHINNERS and DOHAR, *Pastors and the Care of Souls*, pp. 35-36.

¹² J.H. MORAN, *Education and learning in the City of York, 1300-1560* (1979: *Borthwick Paper* 55), p. 5 and p. 7.

¹³ SHINNERS and DOHAR, *Pastors and the Care of Souls*, pp. 40-41.

¹⁴ K. EDWARDS, *English Secular Cathedrals in the Middle Ages* (second edition; Manchester, 1967), pp. 303-315.

¹⁵ MORAN, *Education and Learning in York*, p. 10.

the household school of the Chancellor.¹⁶ Boys might stay in these households for several years: in 1492 William Poteman, treasurer of York left bequests to various boys who had been with him from between three and eight years.¹⁷ This too would have provided the social separation and distinct pattern of living which could have inculcated a particular social and even gender identity, though probably also with a distinctly noble ambience.

While boys trained in the households of the senior clergy could, if able, expect rapid promotion, most young men would need to look for an occupation to support their studies during or after their grammar school education. A boy might then be regarded as ready for on the job training, through a post as holy-water clerk in a parish.¹⁸ In 1287 the Statutes of Exeter required that in every church within ten miles of a town or city of the diocese (implicitly with a suitable school) the post of holy-water bearer should be reserved for a student, and this was probably more widely observed than just in the South-West. The fact that the Exeter Statutes reserved this post to a student, and anticipated some opposition from parishioners suggests that in practice this post often went to a boy with no more than a song school education or who was being educated privately by one of the parish clergy, and reinforces the view that the formal education described above probably benefited only a minority of boys.¹⁹ Although a boy would probably in most cases continue his education, if at all, with the clergy of his or a neighbouring parish, in some cases, there was a possibility of further learning, either through the theological schools maintained by cathedrals, as at York, or by going to one of the universities. This last however, was usually only available to the able who also had the financial resources or the patronage to make it possible.

In principle a boy appointed as a holy water clerk might become an acolyte at fourteen in the last of the minor orders, and proceed through the major orders as sub-deacon at seventeen, deacon at nineteen, and priest at twenty-four. So in theory a career embarked upon at around seven to ten years of age, culminated in final committal to priesthood and celibacy around fifteen years later, allowing plenty of time for the inculcation and internalisation of a clerical identity. The step from minor to major orders at around seventeen meant that the commitment to a life of celibacy was taken in principle at around the mid-

¹⁶ MORAN, *Education and Learning in York*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁷ Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, York, Archbishop's Register 23 (Rotherham), fol. 352.

¹⁸ HEATH, *English Parish Clergy*, p. 19.

¹⁹ SHINNERS and DOHAR, *Pastors and Care of Souls*, pp. 41-42.

point of this progression and at about the same age as the young clerk's lay contemporaries were beginning to become involved in courtship. In theory then, young men should have been aware at an early stage in their career that they were rejecting the possibility of marriage and doing so well before their lay contemporaries were beginning to marry. In other words their clerical, celibate identity should have been well-developed before marriage began to loom as a possibility, and should therefore have been seen as an irrelevance. In practice of course there is plenty of evidence of young clerks having engaged in courtship, and also that some clerks and priests were unable or unwilling to keep the discipline of celibacy. Nevertheless, in the century or so after the Black Death, I would argue, it became increasingly difficult both to internalise a sense of clerical identity founded on celibacy, and also to be sure that clerisy and celibacy necessarily went together.²⁰

As Robert Swanson has pointed out, in the years after the Black Death, it became increasingly common to delay formal commitment to the priesthood until relatively late:

From the mid-fourteenth century, candidates normally received successive major orders at successive ceremonies. They could thus rise from laity to priesthood within about six months....With a governing age of twenty-four, this represents commitment to a celibate career at about twenty-three at the earliest.²¹

In other words men committing themselves to priestly celibacy were doing so at much the same age as their lay counterparts were committing themselves to marriage. Swanson suggests that where individual careers can be traced, this was often because men were waiting until they were sure of a benefice before they made the irrevocable step. This consideration probably primarily affected that minority of well-educated and well-connected men who could expect a good career, such as university fellows. For the majority the motivation is less clear. Swanson argues that this represented a deeply-considered and thought-through decision and, it might be argued, an awareness of the high demands

²⁰ This would have been exacerbated in the years immediately after the Black Death by the influx into the church of widowers, as bishops sought to fill vacancies. While there had never been a bar on widowers entering the church, the numbers of them being ordained in the latter fourteenth century must have thrown some doubt on the necessary connection of clerisy and celibacy, and perhaps finally ended the valorisation of virginity for the clergy to be found in some high medieval texts. Knighton's snuffy comments on widower clergy are quoted in: DOHAR, *Black Death and Pastoral Leadership*, p. 118.

²¹ R.N. SWANSON, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 1989), p. 42.

which the priestly life made.²² But the effect was also to make the choice between marriage and celibacy that much more stark, and arguably to leave late-deciders without the grown-into commitment available to those who had entered the sub-diaconate in their late teens.

Another reason for delaying ordination is that it was becoming increasingly possible for a man to pass through the minor orders but not to progress to major orders and still to be able to find himself employment, either within the Church or in the increasing array of other employments where a modicum of learning was valuable.²³ And men in minor orders were not committed to celibacy. They could and did marry. Here clerical life and lay life were becoming increasingly similar.

We tend to assume that those who married and did not proceed to major orders were in some sense failures. Men whose weaknesses of the flesh had condemned them to marriage before they could reach their goal of the priesthood, or who, unable to persuade a patron to reward them with a benefice, had fallen into poverty and something a little, but not much, better than concubinage. The pall of William Langland's self-portrait, whether accurately autobiographical or constructed, as a man who had had a clerical education but whose patrons had died before he could be ordained, and as a result had pieced together a living singing for souls, in order to precariously support his wife and daughter, has long hung over the married clergy of late medieval England.²⁴

And yet once you begin to look for them, they pop up all over the place. Moreover the source in which I have most commonly found them, the probate registers of the archdiocese of York, represents only those who had enough in the way of property to justify the making and registering of a will. The 'William Langlands' of the archdiocese are unlikely to appear in this source. Nevertheless this does show that a range of occupations were possible for married clergy, and that they could be both financially and intellectually rewarding. It is not yet possible to suggest how many of the clergy of late medieval England, or even of late medieval York were married clerks, and may never be, though the impression is that their numbers increased over the fifteenth century. "*Clericus*" or 'clerk' was a generic title which covered those in both major and

²² SWANSON, *Church and Society*, pp. 42-43.

²³ SWANSON, *Church and Society*, p. 43. MORAN, *Education and Learning in York*, p. 15: "The local demand for such skills was reflected in the increasing number of professionals, particularly chaplains, scribes and clerks recorded in the freemen's register".

²⁴ D. PEARSALL, *Piers Plowman by William Langland: an Edition of the C-text* (London, 1978), pp. 97-99 and p. 341. Pearsall emphasises the likelihood that the autobiographical details represent a constructed persona.

minor orders, and as a descriptor is unhelpful. In some cases it appears to have been used as a humility *topos*, by men who could legitimately claim something more, such as John Berell († 1439), “*clericus*”, who turns out from further reading of his will to have been rector of Gilling church, although almost certainly an absentee.²⁵ In other cases it is impossible, simply from the will to work out precisely how they supported themselves. In some cases it is only possible to spot them because of a reference to a wife. Where a wife had predeceased her husband, and he had not made arrangements for burial, or commemoration with her, he is unlikely to be spotted, except by very painstaking nominal linkage exercises. The numbers of married clergy are thus likely to be under enumerated in any survey.

Clerical status may also have been ‘lost’ as men ceased to identify themselves as clergy, perhaps as they increasingly made their living in non-clerical ways. In 1399 the administration of the will of Margaret, wife of “*William del Bothe clericus*” was registered, with William as executor.²⁶ He is probably the same man as “*William de Bothe, clericus*”, recipient of a coffer bound with iron in the will of Richard Lyndesay (probate 1397), clerk, living in the parish of All Saints, North St.²⁷ But the William del Bothe who died in 1426 described himself simply as citizen.²⁸ The gap of twenty-seven years makes it difficult to be sure that this was the same man, it could have been a son, or nephew. He was certainly living in the right part of York, for he wished to be buried in the entry to the cemetery of his parish church St John, Ousebridgend, next to William Sampson.²⁹ He also had an unusual prologue to his will, slightly more characteristic of clerics than laymen, bequeathing his soul not only to the usual dedicatees but also to “St Michael Archangel, St Peter principal of apostles, St John the Evangelist, St Thomas of Canterbury, St Blaise, St Nicholas, the good angels my advocates” (meaning his guardian angels), and just to be on the safe side, All Saints. If it was the same man he had married again, for he referred to a wife, Alienor, and a son Thomas. His means of livelihood is not mentioned, but his bequest of all his tenements in Kergate to his wife, for

²⁵ BI Prob. Reg. 3, fol. 585v. He sought burial in York Minster near the chapel of St Mary and the Holy Angels, and was probably a canon of that chapel, otherwise known as St Sepulchre’s. The contents of his will suggest that although he was familiar with the parish and its inhabitants, his main interests were focused at the Minster.

²⁶ BI Prob. Reg. 3, fol. 25v.

²⁷ BI Prob. Reg. 2, fol. 8.

²⁸ BI Prob. Reg. 2, fol. 493v.

²⁹ St John, Ousebridgend is the adjacent parish to All Saints, North Street, lying in the corner of North Street and Micklegate.

life, and then to his son suggest that he may have been drawing an income from property by the end of his life.

Thomas dell Abbay († 1394), who described himself as “*clericus*”, seems also to have moved away from his original profession. His original connection with St Mary’s abbey from which he took his name is unclear, though he may have been living in the Liberty, for he asked to be buried at St Olave’s and bequeathed his soul to the saint.³⁰ He left all his property in the city and suburbs of York, which included two messuages in Walmgate and a garden in Fishergate, to his wife, Alice, and after her death to “my fellow members of the tailors’ guild” to establish a chantry in the Friars Minor for himself and the members of the guild.³¹

As a married man he could not have been the guild’s priest, though he might have been its clerk, but given the extent of his property, it is perhaps more likely that he was working as a tailor. There is of course the possibility that his membership of the guild was a matter of convenience, rather than strict accuracy, in which case we may guess that he was using his clerical skills, or drawing an income from property.³²

The will of Agnes, wife of John Elvelay, clerk, also suggests that conventional clerical skills were not the only way in which clerical households survived. Agnes left extensive quantities of bluet cloth, blanket and linen as well as smaller quantities of high quality cloth such as a new tapestry powdered with white lilies in pots, and a large wardrobe.³³ She was either remarkably keen on stockpiling for domestic use, or she was manufacturing or dealing in cloth or clothing. Unfortunately in the absence of John’s will we cannot see his contribution to the family economy, and we cannot tell whether he was a well paid ecclesiastical lawyer or notary public supporting Agnes and her wardrobe, or an impoverished Langland figure, supported by Agnes as economic powerhouse.

Some larger guilds did employ clerks, and this was an employment which was open to married clergy, as for example Thomas Baxster († 1485), clerk of

³⁰ St Olave’s parish church lies adjacent to the gatehouse into the precinct of St Mary’s Abbey.

³¹ BI Prob. Reg. 1, fols. 76v-79: “*confratribus meis de arte cissorum*”. There are no folios 77-78. The translation of “*arte cissorum*” is ambiguous, and could be rendered as shearmen’s guild. In either case some association with textiles is certain.

³² H. SWANSON, “The illusion of economic structure: craft guilds in late medieval English towns”, *Past and Present* 121 (1988), p. 33.

³³ BI Prob. Reg. 1, fols. 79v-80.

the Saints Christopher and George guild.³⁴ This was a large and prestigious guild but it is difficult to see how good a living Baxster was making due to the brevity of his will. Nevertheless he was of sufficient status to request burial in the choir of his parish church St Martin, Coney St, and to leave seven marks for a one year chantry. After specifying some funeral expenses the rest of his goods were left to his wife Katherine. Two of the witnesses of his will were merchants, probably members of the guild. The request for burial in the choir may be a reflection of his status in the guild, but might also suggest that despite his married state he was involved in the provision of services in the church. Employment as a clerk was not only offered by guilds. The city of York from the late fourteenth century also needed clerks, of whom Roger Burton is the best known.

Other clerks were able to make a living at least partly independently of the church as Notaries Public. In 1439 Thomas Appleby left a considerable estate including property in Doncaster, York, and Howden to his wife. He probably practised in the York ecclesiastical court for he asked to be buried in the Minster, "next to Master John Harwodd formerly my master", but this was clearly not the extent of his interests. He left a tenement in the parish of St Nicholas, of the gift and feoffment of Robert Forester of York, walker, suggesting that he was involved in civil law practice, and his will was witnessed by another notary public, his confessor, Richard Dobson a brewer, and the master of the ship Anthony. An interest in mercantile activities is indicated not only by this last, but also by forgotten tithes to Holy Trinity, Hull.³⁵ It is perhaps ironic that a man who must have drawn up many wills in his time and was clearly successful in his profession should have left the drawing up of his own will to a colleague, who only remembered to put in the forgotten tithes in the last line and who could not remember Appleby's wife's name, calling her variously Isabella and Margaret.

Appleby was not the only married clerk practising in the York ecclesiastical court. The number of men serving the Consistory Court of York who were married is perhaps the most interesting aspect of the growth of a married clergy. Robert Esyngwald, procurator general of the court of York remembered his late wife, Hawise, and John Huet, proctor of the court left property to his wife and family.³⁶ In Esyngwald's will the canon lawyers of York become

³⁴ BI Prob. Reg. 5, fol. 279v.

³⁵ BI Prob. Reg. 3, fols. 592v-593. Master John Harwood was an advocate of the court of York who died in 1406.

³⁶ BI Prob. Reg. 2, fols. 149v-150 (Esyngwald). Prob. Reg. 2, fol. 305 (Huet).

almost members of an extended family as he bequeathed 40s and "some little books" to Master William Langton "formerly my clerk", and to his godson, Master Robert Stillington, doctor of laws, "a book called Clement, a book called Raymond and a book called Innocent", which were his collection of canon law texts and commentaries. He also left 20s to the Official of the Court, the Commissary, Receiver of the Treasury, advocates, procurators and others of the court "*pro uno jonkrey*", a junket or drinking. In the end though his family seems to have been the Minster and its clergy; he asked to be buried in the Minster in front of the image of the Virgin "where the people offer to the fabric". His wife was perhaps buried in St Michael le Belfrey where, in a last piece of patronage, he established a two year chantry for the two of them, his parents and benefactors, employing William Burn, chaplain, "unless he die or be promoted".

The consistory court of York as elsewhere was dominated by sexual matters, marriage disputes, and offences such as fornication and adultery. It has long been recognised that the courts generally operated in a humane manner, more concerned with the spirit than the letter of the law, and interested in keeping marriages together where possible, and elsewhere minimising the wreckage from relationships.³⁷ It has generally been regarded as a testimony to the training that the canon lawyers received at the universities, that these celibate men were able to deal with the frailties of laypeople so adequately.³⁸ While not wishing to detract from the value of a higher university education, it may be that these men were in fact much more personally familiar with the problems brought before the court than has previously been thought.

One case in particular brought these issues home to at least one young member of the ecclesiastical court of Durham. Although by 1500 it was not uncommon for episcopal registrars to be married, it was much less so in 1400.³⁹ In 1420-1421 Katherine Carvour of York brought a matrimonial case against Master Richard Burgh, clerk who had recently been appointed Official of the Court of Durham.⁴⁰ She had had a child by him and claimed that they were "married before God", and that he had sent her lots of love letters. A number of clergy testified to their knowledge of the case. Several testified that they had

³⁷ C. HARPER-BILL, *The Pre-Reformation Church in England, 1400-1530* (Harlow, 1989), p. 55 and p. 63: "At every level the canon lawyers seem to have administered justice fairly and impartially, with more regard to the spirit than to the letter of the law".

³⁸ HARPER-BILL, *Pre-Reformation Church*, p. 56: "The celibate judges showed remarkable tolerance and humanity".

³⁹ SWANSON, *Church and Society*, p. 43.

⁴⁰ BI CP F 129.

heard Katherine's claims, and a number asked Richard about his intentions, and the figure of a £40 dowry was mentioned. Richard however seems to have felt that he could not take a wife to Durham. He told Sir Thomas Tesedale, rector of St Crux, that he could not have any woman to wife and George Whitby, chaplain reported that Richard thought that he would lose his job if he married her.⁴¹ The court seems to have taken the side of a fellow professional and dismissed the case, though the fact that Katherine's brother Richard Ulskelf, a vicar-choral denied knowing about a contract may have been decisive.

It is in the context of these kinds of cases that we should read the stories and verses about clerical seducers. While some of these may have been self-congratulatory odes to clerical prowess, many more were aimed at young women like Katherine Carvour, who believed the young clerk who said he would marry her. He did after all get as far as discussing the sum to be paid for her dowry with mutual friends, and therefore must have looked like a serious prospect to more than just an impressionable young woman. The problem for young women like Katherine Carvour was not that these young men could not marry (in which case it was relatively easy to recognise a chat-up line for what it was), but that they could, and so it was difficult to know which of these young men were serious. Richard Burgh may initially have been serious but it was easy for him to get cold feet with worry about the effect on his career, and difficult for Katherine to enforce a marriage with a young man who probably 'ought' to stay single. She would probably have found it easier to pursue a marriage with a lay man who would have been expected to marry, and would in a similar case have come under considerable social and canon law pressure to regularise the relationship. A hundred years later another young man in Richard Burgh's position would have found the prospect of combining marriage and career much less problematic as it had become relatively common. In the early fifteenth century the status of married clergy in the ecclesiastical courts was still ambiguous enough to cause anxiety.

While some clergy did establish marriages and families, and careers outside the church, others formed less legal unions. Clergy who were in major orders and thus not permitted to marry set up what may in the terms of the day have been thought of as 'pretend family relationships'. It is difficult to know whether concubinage became more or less common in the period between the

⁴¹ "(N)on fuit adhuc in proposito habere aliquam mulierem in uxorem suam" according to Tesedale, and "dimitte beneficium clericale si ipsam duceret in uxorem" said Whitby.

Black Death and the Reformation.⁴² The church authorities waged regular and regularly fruitless war on clergy whom it knew to be involved in relationships, though it may have been more concerned with those clerics who were neither continent nor in stable relationships, such as the York vicar-choral William Easington charged in 1417 with six cases of fornication, and perhaps the last straw, one of slander against a fellow vicar-choral. By contrast William Holbek was only brought before the court when he had been living with Agnes Smyth for seven years, during which time she had borne several children to him in the Bedern, the collegiate home of the vicars-choral.⁴³

More senior clergy were even less likely to be brought before the court. John Kimblow, rector of Lamplugh, in Cumbria, requested burial in 1469, in Carlisle cathedral.⁴⁴ In many respects he appears and perhaps was a devout priest, seeking burial by the altar of St Sitha, establishing a chantry and requiring that every night after the *Salve Regina* the choir sing five sequences of the Joys of the Virgin before her image. He was part of a clerical family, sharing a house in Carlisle with two cousins, (he was evidently not resident in his remote parish) one of whom was already a priest, and the other of whom was given an incentive in the form of a four year chantry if he became one, and Kimblow's big "*portiforium*", even if he did not. Unexplained is his lifetime gift of another house to Joanna Lucas, although it may be explained by his gift of his tenement in Carlisle market to his daughter Marion.

That Katherine Carvour, a young woman admittedly from a clerical milieu, could claim to receive love letters is an indication of the way education, particularly by the fifteenth century was decreasingly the province of the clergy, even in areas where the education of young clerks was at stake. By the fifteenth century the three successive grammar masters of St Peter's school between 1426 and 1472 were all married, and could not give an example of clerical

⁴² Charges of incontinence were made against forty-three clergy in Bp Trefnant's visitation of the Hereford diocese in 1397, only less than the number of charges of neglect of office. DOHAR, *Black Death and Pastoral Leadership*, pp. 140-141, and p. 147: "Parishioners frequently pointed out the sexual sins of their pastors, but the former were often more concerned with public drunkenness or patent abuses that brought scandal to their church". THOMSON, *Early Tudor Church*, pp. 168-171: "A study of Chichester diocese suggests that clerical incontinence was a problem in some 15 per cent of the parishes" with strictures that in many studies accusations were not always sustained.

⁴³ B. DOBSON, "The later middle ages, 1215-1500" in: G.E. AYLMER and R. CANT (ed.), *A History of York Minster* (Oxford, 1977), p. 91.

⁴⁴ *Wills and Inventories from the Registry of the Archdeaconry of Richmond*, ed. J. RAINE jr (1853: *Surtees Society* 26), pp. 6-8.

celibacy to their students.⁴⁵ The Freeman's Register also records the names of a number of grammar masters in the city, who would have been free to marry.⁴⁶

The residentiary canons of the secular cathedrals appear in the fifteenth century to have been interested in bringing up the sons of the local gentry and urban elites.⁴⁷ William Poteman had referred to the boys being educated in his household as the sons of gentlemen, as had a predecessor as treasurer, Robert Wolveden († 1432).⁴⁸ Some of these, particularly in the increasingly aristocratic-dominated church of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, would go on to clerical careers, but many did not. Having acquired the kind of education which would allow them to manage estates and an elaborate household (Latin composition, accounts, a smattering of law, protocol and a useful contacts book), they would return to lay life, trained as heirs or stewards to other estates. In the process they would also have received something between an immersion in, and a light sprinkling of, clerical culture. This was one of the most important ways, beyond the teaching of the parish priest or family chaplain, in which clerical culture was transmitted to the lay elite, and has implications for the convergence of lay and clerical culture. One wonders how far for example the fashion for vows of chastity made by gentry widows, particularly towards the end of the fifteenth century was influenced by the ideas picked up by their husbands, brothers and even sons in clerical households.⁴⁹

In the thirteenth century the post of holy water clerk had often been a scholarship job for a boy aiming at a clerical career, but had by the fifteenth often been incorporated into the job of the parish clerk.⁵⁰ The parish clerk himself was usually in minor orders and might be employed as a deacon, effectively receiving training like a modern curate. But by the fifteenth century this post had frequently become a dead end or an end in itself, no longer a first step for intending priests but a lifelong career for men who because they were only in minor orders could and did also marry. Indeed the separation of the clerkship

⁴⁵ MORAN, *Education and Learning in York*, pp. 39-40.

⁴⁶ *Register of the Freeman of the City of York from the City Records, 1272-1558*, ed. F. COLLINS (1896: *Surtees Society* 96).

⁴⁷ DOBSON, "Later middle ages", p. 104: "Northern knights and even bishops were prepared to pay considerable sums to secure the admission of the sons of their relatives and friends to the 'familia' of a residentiary canon; and it was in this way that many Yorkshire boys began their own clerical careers."

⁴⁸ MORAN, *Education and Learning in York*, p. 44.

⁴⁹ P.H. CULLUM, "Vowesses and female lay piety in the Province of York, 1300-1530", *Northern History* 32 (1996), pp. 21-41. M.C. ERLER, "Vowesses", *Medieval Studies* 57 (1995), pp. 155-203.

⁵⁰ HEATH, *English Parish Clergy*, pp. 19-20.

from the priesthood is evidenced by the establishment in London of a fraternity of parish clerks which later became a livery company.⁵¹

Nor was this only a London phenomenon: in 1477 William Brouneflet, who described himself as citizen and parish clerk, asked for burial in the chancel of his parish church, St Michael the Archangel, beside his wife and children.⁵² It is not clear which parish of St Michael, le Belfrey or Spurriergate, is intended, though the fact that the will was recorded within the Exchequer Court rather than the Dean and Chapter's court suggests it was more likely Spurriergate. Brouneflet left no surviving children, but had taken his niece Katherine, his brother's daughter into his home. Although he appears not to have owned his house he left most of his household goods to Katherine, including a silver-gilt mazer, six silver spoons, two rosaries: one silver, and one agate with silver, some pewter and a large quantity of household linen, including a bed and several hangings. Katherine was quite young for if she died still a minor then the goods were to be sold for his soul. Even beyond this he was able to anticipate that the residue of his goods would be able to support a chaplain to celebrate for him in the parish church, though he did not know for how long. Brouneflet seems to have established himself as a useful and respected member of his community, and if not wealthy then certainly not impoverished.

It had, of course, been a long time since literacy had been a preserve of the clergy, but the increase in the number of schools which taught Latin, and the growth of the vernacular as a language of administration, meant that far more laymen were able to pursue careers in administration. In York the fifteenth century saw the growth of a number of parish schools, as at St Martin's, Coney St, as well as in the households of clerics.⁵³ A corollary of this was the growing numbers of lay men involved in central royal administration, in the kinds of jobs which had once been the perquisites of clerics. Many of these men began their training in clerical schools and may have taken minor orders.⁵⁴ One of the reasons suggested for the increase of laymen in these posts, apart from their availability is the increased concern in some quarters in the late fourteenth century about the suitability of clergy being involved in secular administration. Anne Hudson, has pointed to the use of the terms "*hermofrodita*" and

⁵¹ SWANSON, *Church and Society*, p. 43.

⁵² BI Prob. Reg. 5, fol. 119v. St Michael le Belfrey lies adjacent to the minster and was within the Liberty.

⁵³ MORAN, *Learning and Education in York*, pp. 11-14.

⁵⁴ R.L. STOREY, "Gentleman-bureaucrats", in: C.H. CLOUGH (ed.), *Profession, Vocation and Culture in Later Medieval England: Essays dedicated to the memory of A. R. Myers* (Liverpool, 1982), pp. 90-109.

"*ambidexter*" by Wycliffe and some followers to describe clerks involved especially in royal administration, and argues that the replies to these charges betray some uneasiness with the practice. She does not investigate the meanings attached to these terms, but they suggest that some contemporaries saw the distinctions between clergy and laity in what we would call gendered terms. Her argument is that it was the unwillingness to be seen in these terms which led clerks to avoid promotion to major orders, and which paved the way for the laicisation of the bureaucracy.⁵⁵

Not only were the distinctive qualities of clergy identity being eroded by the encroachment of laity on clerical knowledge, and by the growth of a married clergy, but also by the requirement that clergy take up arms. While the clergy were generally banned from the carrying and use of weapons because of the canon law ban on priests shedding blood, this was reversed for a period during the Hundred Years' War. From about the middle of the fourteenth century to c.1418, on occasions of threat of invasion, the clergy were required to muster to perform as a defensive militia, in armour and carrying weapons. Few of them ever needed to use their weapons in anger, but this direct contravention of canon law does not appear to have generated ecclesiastical discussion let alone controversy.⁵⁶ However two grants of clerical taxation in the 1380s, significantly in the Northern Province, were only made on the condition that the clergy not have to array themselves.⁵⁷ This requirement was laid upon the clergy by the Crown but does not seem to have elicited any objection from the bishops, some of whom, like the archbishops of York and bishops of Durham, had long had a role in organising resistance to Scottish invasions. Archbishop Bowet was carried in a chair into battle against the Scots in 1422, because he was too ill to sit on a horse. Indeed the only ones to have objected, like Langland and some of the lollards, seem to have been marginal voices. Some indeed, like the aristocratic Bishop Despenser of Norwich, who in 1383 led a 'crusade' against the Flemings, appear to have had a positive enthusiasm for the military life, having already participated in the suppression of the Peasants'

⁵⁵ A. HUDSON, "*Hermofodrita* or *ambidexter*: Wycliffite views on clerks in secular office", in: M. ASTON and C. RICHMOND (ed.), *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages* (Stroud, 1997), pp. 41-51.

⁵⁶ A. MCHARDY, "The clergy and the Hundred Years' War", in: W.J. SHEILS (ed.), *The Church and War* (Oxford, 1983: *Studies in Church History* 20), pp. 171-179.

⁵⁷ B. MCNAB, "Obligations of the church in English society: military arrays of the clergy, 1369-1418", in: W.C. JORDAN, B. MCNAB and T.F. RUIZ (ed.), *Order and Innovation in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Joseph R. Strayer* (Princeton, N.J., 1976), pp. 299-300.

Revolt in his own diocese. This licensed transgression of clerical gender identity seems to have elicited little or no anxiety.

John Mirc's strictures about not carrying baslards or long daggers seems in the context to be merely a reiteration of traditional injunctions and not a response to contemporary circumstance.⁵⁸ Some clergy certainly did own weapons. The young clerk Richard del Drynghouse († 1394) bequeathed his best baslard harnessed with silver and Richard Lyndesay, clerk (will 1393, probate 1397) left his baslard to William de Ottelay, chaplain.⁵⁹ In 1438 Master James Bagulo, rector of All Saints, North St, left his small baslard with a belt harnessed with silver to Sir Thomas Astell, chaplain, along with a book of motets.⁶⁰ Two of these cases imply the ownership of more than one weapon, and in two cases recipients were chaplains, and thus definitely of priestly status unlike two of the donors.

While the possession of a baslard, though technically not permitted, was probably not uncommon, the ownership of other weapons was more problematic.⁶¹ Master Robert Esyngwald, procurator general of the Court of York († 1443) left his sword ("*gladium*"), among other goods to a layman.⁶² Elsewhere we have evidence of the ownership of pollaxes, as in the case of two vicars-choral of the Minster brought before the Capitular court. In 1421 Richard Kirkeby and William Wyvell, one a deacon, the other a chaplain, were charged with walking through the streets of York at eleven at night on the eve of St John the Baptist, carrying pollaxes and wearing "*pallettes*" or helmets on their heads and chaplets around their necks, against honesty and priestly dignity.⁶³ They admitted to having gone to see the St John's Eve fires but denied the pollaxes and helmets, saying they had been dressed as priests with chaplets on their heads. The court appears to have accepted their explanation, for it merely admonished them. However the fact that in the same month another vicar-choral was brought before the court for spending the night in his godmother's house and thereby giving rise to suspicion, and gave as his defence that he had

⁵⁸ C. BLAIR, "The word 'Baselard'", *Journal of the Arms and Armour Society* 11 (1984), pp. 193-219. I am grateful to Philip Lankester for providing me with a copy of this article.

⁵⁹ BI Prob. Reg. 1, fol. 74. Drynghouse's youth is indicated by his description in relation to his father. Prob. Reg. 2, fol. 8 (Lyndesay).

⁶⁰ BI Prob. Reg. 2, fol. 17.

⁶¹ BLAIR, "Baselard", p. 194: "The very widespread use of the baselard in England, especially by the merchant and craftsmen classes, but also by the aristocracy and even priests, is amply testified by fourteenth and fifteenth century wills and inventories".

⁶² BI Prob. Reg. 2, fol. 149v.

⁶³ BI Dean and Chapter Act Book (D/C A B) 1, fol. 61v.

been sheltering there after having been pursued by a group of armed men must give rise to some doubts. On several occasions vicars-choral were seen walking the streets in civilian dress with "knives and daggers hanging between their legs".⁶⁴ There is a certain phallic symbolism in evidence here, which suggests an anxiety about gender identity.⁶⁵ The vicars-choral were on various occasions literally at daggers drawn with different parties and in 1396 a bridge was constructed between the Bedern's gatehouse and that of the Minster in order that the vicars-choral not have to brave the mean street of Goodramgate.⁶⁶

In conclusion, by the fifteenth century, the decreasing significance of literacy as a marker of clerical identity, and the increasing ease of finding lay occupations using clerical skills, the decreasing significance of the bearing of arms as a sign of distinctively lay masculinity, and the increased possibilities for men with a clerical training to marry and have a worthwhile career, often still within the church, meant that elite lay masculinity and clerical masculinity were coming more and more to resemble each other. By the fifteenth century learning to be a priest was increasingly like learning to be a man, and vice versa.

⁶⁴ DOBSON, "Later middle ages", p. 91.

⁶⁵ Another word for baslard "*penart*" was apparently used as a euphemism for penis. BLAIR, "Baselard", p. 199. The poem "*Thus bere I myn baselard*" quoted *Ibidem*, p. 193, also appears to play on this identification. This may in part be because the baslard was often worn suspended from a belt or hanger at the front of the body, sometimes in the middle, rather than at the hip. *Ibidem*, p. 217.

⁶⁶ DOBSON, "Later middle ages", pp. 90-91.

The York Cycle and Instruction on the Sacraments

PAMELA M. KING

Since Chambers published *The Medieval Stage* almost a century ago, his smooth Darwinian approach to medieval drama has been almost wholly rejected.¹ Mystery plays have come to be read as a discrete cultural phenomenon associated with urban growth and the concomitant growth of social structures, rather than as a secularisation of pre-existent Latin liturgical forms. Late twentieth-century criticism, predominantly the product of protestant and humanist northern European and North American culture, has gradually written its own cultural assumptions into the breach of Chambers' Darwinian narrative. Moreover, for readers or audiences whose lives are not punctuated by the liturgical round, the compilation of short episodes into cycles for a single annual occasional performance largely conceals the calendrical significance of each episode; the cycles are readily explained as plays based on edited highlights of the Bible's grand narrative. This peculiarly anachronistic habit of reading, threatens to detach the plays from fifteenth-century patterns of lay-worship, from liturgical and para-liturgical forms, almost entirely. Undergraduates first encounter mystery plays in anthologies, and, although discriminating criticism can characterise easily enough the difference between cycles, there remains a reluctance to go as far as to foreground the fundamental distinctions of theological focus and of mode of expression which make each cycle distinctive. This paper is one of a series of thematically related studies which set out to explore the ways in which the York cycle of mystery plays owes a greater debt to the liturgy as an organisational structure, than has been acknowledged for some time. The *York Plays* draw in particular on liturgical and paraliturgical forms which reflect trends in lay worship in the volatile period following Arun-

¹ E.K. CHAMBER, *The Medieval Stage*, 2 volumes (Oxford, 1903), see for example II, p. 69.

del's Constitutions to which they belong. Moreover a refocusing on the *York Plays'* common heritage of unifying themes and modes of expression reopens the possibility of developing readings of the York text as a single literary-dramatic entity, despite its having been written by an unknown number of hands over half a century or more.

A refocusing on resonances of lay worship in the cycle cannot mean a return to the unquestioning acceptance of the plays as primarily didactic in function. Refinements to our knowledge of lay literacy in the late medieval towns, based on the research of Michael Clanchy² and others has ruled that out; mystery plays are no longer read as simply books for the illiterate. The plays do not tell their audiences things they did not already know so much as reinforce and celebrate received knowledge. This need not mean, however, that the playwrights abstained from exploiting opportunities for lay instruction when they arose. York in the early fifteenth-century was the focus of quite a lot of activity in lay catechesis. One challenge for scholarship now is to put the liturgical and instructional burden back on the agenda whilst at the same time recognising, because of the work of the intervening years on the social and performative aspects of the cycle, that we are dealing with a radically unstable text and, in some envisaged performance contexts, a potentially subversive one.

There is catechitical material throughout the cycle. The programme of late medieval lay catechesis has many and various sources, and their inter-relationships are not altogether clear. Most versions of the pastoral syllabus for the fifteenth century drew on the Pecham's *Ignorantia Sacerdotum* (1281), including John Myrc's *Instructions for Parish Priests*, or, nearer home, *The Lay Folk's Catechism* written in 1357 by Archbishop John Thoresby of York.³ Versions of the latter, particularly that translated into English verse by John Gaytryge, a monk of St Mary's Abbey in York, were in common currency at the period of the cycles, their material part of the apparatus of the faith familiar in urban society. Jonathan Hughes has suggested that Thoresby's project was

² See especially: M.T. CLANCHY, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (second edition; Oxford, 1993), especially pp. 328-334 ("Practical Literacy").

³ John Myrc, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed. E. PEACOCK (1868: *EETS OS* 31). John Thoresby, *The Lay Folks' Catechism*, T.F. SIMMONS and H.E. NOLLOTH (ed.) (1901: *EETS OS* 118). See: A. HUDSON, "A new look at the *Lay Folks' Catechism*", *Viator* 16 (1985), pp. 243-258, for the precedence of variant texts and manuscripts. This English verse version of Pecham's "*Ignorancia sacerdotis...*" is integrated into Archbishop Thoresby of York's Register for 25 November 1357 (ff 297v-298v). The English text is, in many manuscripts, attributed to John Gaytryck, a monk of St Mary's Abbey in York. See also: R.N. SWANSON, "The origins of the *Lay Folks' Catechism*", *Medium Aevum* 60 (1991), pp. 92-97.

to urge that a testing of catechitical knowledge should be integral to the annual administration of the sacrament of penance, and that salvation depended upon a knowledge of the laws of God. The effect was to extend self-examination beyond the simple process of confession.⁴ The books are pragmatic manuals which tell the priest what to do and what to teach rather than investigating the theological significance of the items included. The spiritual efficacy of their content relies on the efficacy of its application. Typically the pastoral syllabus appears to have included the *Paternoster* and *Creed*, the ten commandments and two evangelical precepts, the beatitudes, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the *Ave Maria* (and perhaps the *Magnificat*) and the four sevens: sins, virtues, works of mercy and sacraments. Moreover, we know that the clergy did indeed engage in catechesis and that the laity was familiar with it, took it to heart and assimilated it into their social culture, because wealthy laymen and women responded by spending conspicuous sums of their own money in sponsoring church decoration which illustrated its subjects. The schema seem to have developed standard iconography directed by the laity at the laity in the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the same period in which the mystery cycle was developing into its recorded form.

The most complete set of glass on catechitical subjects is that which was recorded at Great Malvern Priory church by Thomas Habington (1560-1647),⁵ but similar schemes were to be found all over the country. All Saints' church in North Street, York, features the seven corporal works of mercy in one of its windows, put there by a fifteenth-century merchant mayor of York, who also seems to have used them as a guiding principle when he wrote the charitable bequests in his will.⁶ The works of mercy derive from Matthew 25, the account of the Last Judgement, which was, of course, the subject of the Mercers' grand finale to the York cycle. Commonly the *Creed* was believed to be the corporate product of all the apostles, so that in the glass in the parish church of Fairford, Gloucestershire, each apostle carries his attribute and bears a scroll containing his own phrase or portion of the *Creed*.⁷ This may also have been what the Creed window at the Collegiate church of Tattershall in Lincolnshire, made by

⁴ J. HUGHES, *Pastors and Visionaries: Religion and Secular Life in Late Medieval Yorkshire* (Woodbridge, 1988), p. 153.

⁵ G.McN. RUSHFORTH, "Seven sacraments compositions in English medieval art", *The Antiquaries Journal* 9 (1929), pp. 83-100, p. 84, quoting from: *Survey of Worcestershire* (Worcester Historical Society), ii, p. 177.

⁶ P.M. KING, "York Plays, urban piety and the case of Nicholas Blackburn, mercer", *Archiv für Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 232/147 (1995), pp. 37-50.

⁷ E.G. TASKER, *Encyclopaedia of Medieval Church Art* (London, 1993), pp. 195-197.

John Glasier of Stamford in the 1480s but now unfortunately lost, looked like.⁸ Schemes of standing apostles are common in parish church glass, in art and in surviving screens. York had separate, now unfortunately missing, plays devoted to both *Creed* and *Paternoster*. There are a number of representations of the Visitation in urban parish churches, for example in tracery glass of the church of St Peter Mancroft, Norwich. At Tattershall there remain fragments of windows depicting the seven works of mercy, the seven sacraments, and one showing the *Magnificat*, the last now completely lost.⁹ Imaginative illustrations of vice appear all over the place, as a popular subject for schemes of misericords, such as those in Norwich and Beverley cathedrals, but also in humbler churches, like the series of benchends in Blythburgh, Norfolk, where Sloth is shown, for example, as a man in bed.¹⁰ Virtues are less popular, but occur in fully developed and lively scenes of psychomachia such as those found on the fonts at Stanton Fitzwarren and Southrop,¹¹ as well as standing figures such as those of Faith, Hope and Charity at St John's, Stamford, and the four queens Pity, Truth, Peace and Justice at Tattershall.¹² The same material is also to be found in books for the private devotion of the mercantile classes such as those discussed by Eamon Duffy,¹³ from the compendious and lavish Cambridge University Library MS Ff.2.38, which mixes devotional and catechitical material with popular saints' lives and verse romances, to the commonplace book of Robert Reynes of Acle, in a tradition which Duffy sees as culminating in the *Kalendar of Shepherdes* which was to take the interest in do-it-yourself catechesis into print. This is the environment of lay spirituality which might reasonably lead one to expect to find evidence of awareness of the centrality of the catechitical syllabus to lay worship in contemporary plays on religious subjects, even those, like the York cycle, which do not adopt that syllabus centrally as their organising principle.

Of all the catechitical material available to the laity, the treatment of the seven sacraments presents the most interesting case. Sins and virtues, works of mercy, *Paternoster* and *Creed* do, after all, merely illustrate what to do and what to think in this life in order to secure salvation in the next; the sacraments

⁸ P. HEBGIN-BARNES, *The Medieval Stained Glass of the County of Lincolnshire* (Oxford, 1996: *Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi, Great Britain Summary Catalogue* 3), p. 304.

⁹ HEBGIN-BARNES, *Glass of Lincolnshire*, xlix.

¹⁰ TASKER, *Encyclopaedia*, pp. 203-208.

¹¹ TASKER, *Encyclopaedia*, pp. 211-212.

¹² HEBGIN-BARNES, *Glass of Lincolnshire*, xlix, p. 322.

¹³ E. DUFFY, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c.1400-c.1580* (Yale, 1992), pp. 70-717.

alone and by definition implicate lay people in the central transformational mysteries of their religion as they apply to and operate in this life. Ann Eljenholm Nichols has suggested that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries parish art departed from the old legal iconography formerly associated with the sacraments and “created a new visualised theology”, precisely in the interests of lay catechesis.¹⁴ This trend alone might lead one to expect to find treatments of the sacraments in the York cycle because of the milieu in which it was produced and performed. The apparently standard iconography by which the performance of the sacraments in lay contexts are connected directly to the effusions of blood from the body of Christ in contemporary visual art, more pressingly suggests that plays performed in celebration of the feast of *Corpus Christi* are likely to build in catechitical instruction on individual sacraments when individual occasions arise in their grand narrative scheme. Most catechitical texts do little more than list the sacraments, perhaps because most of them, apart from confession and the sacrament of the altar represented single events in the life of the individual, and ordination and matrimony are sacraments of choice. But some texts, notably the *Mirroure of St Edmund*, contextualise them in the life of Christ, demonstrating that they could have more than simply a mnemonic importance to the laity.

Few seven sacraments sequences survive in the visual arts, and Rushforth’s analytical synopsis of surviving sequences in glass and fresco remains authoritative,¹⁵ though more recently Ann Eljenholm Nichols¹⁶ has explored another major source in writing about East Anglian octagonal fonts. In all the surviving sequences, Christ is central to the composition. In southern sequences in glass he is shown exhibiting the wounds of the passion, in northern sequences as Christ Crucified, but in all cases the scenes depicting the individual sacraments are connected to the central figure by streams of blood emanating from the wounds, the five wounds connecting differently in different places to the sequence of seven sacraments.¹⁷ On fonts, the eighth side of the font is either a scene of Christ’s baptism by John or a crucifixion. Northern glass sequences include that in the tiny remote church of St Anthony, Cartmel Fell, Cumbria, built in the early sixteenth century, but containing in its east window fragments of the seven sacraments from a fifteenth century sequence identifiably from a

¹⁴ A.E. NICHOLS, *Seeable Signs: the Iconography of the Seven Sacraments 1350-1544* (Woodbridge, 1994), p. 303.

¹⁵ RUSHFORTH, “Seven sacraments compositions”. But see also: G.McN. RUSHFORTH, *Medieval Christian Imagery* (Oxford, 1936), pp. 328-331.

¹⁶ NICHOLS, *Seeable Signs*.

¹⁷ RUSHFORTH, “Seven sacraments compositions”, pp. 89-92.

York glass-painting workshop.¹⁸ The glass was reputedly moved there from the nearby Cartmel Priory, where glass of the same date and style on other subjects still survives, at the Dissolution. Matrimony alone remains in an imported French glass sequence c.1500 at Ayscoughfee Hall, Lincolnshire.¹⁹ And in the east window of Tattershall Collegiate Church, also Lincolnshire, there are fragments of a seven sacraments sequence made in 1482 by Thomas Wodshawe and Richard Twygge, probably Gloucestershire glaziers.²⁰ The wall painting recorded by Rushforth at Kirton-in-Lindsey church, also in Lincolnshire, completes the list of surviving northern witnesses to the subject known to Rushforth, though evidence from elsewhere suggests unsurprisingly that more than one sequence was originally included in glazing schemes in York itself.²¹

The first half of the fifteenth-century, during which we assume that most of the pageants would have been either written or rewritten, prior to the initial recording of their content in the 1460s, was a period during which the church officially encouraged a return to orthodox sacramentalism. The lead came from Canterbury legislation, notably Arundel's *Constitutions*, and Nicholas Love's writing played an important part in this movement for the North. The pageants as a whole play their part in this return to orthodoxy by embellishing the celebration of the feast of *Corpus Christi*, the annual thanksgiving for the sacrament of the altar, the calendrial affirmation of transubstantiation, and to make it the city's major holiday of the year. Yet the potentially subversive enactment of sacraments of the church by non-ordained citizens is hard to avoid in a historical narrative sequence which contains the baptism and the Last Supper as key episodes in the plot.

Any search for a coherent sequence of seven sacraments in the cycle fails, but as with other liturgical and para-liturgical materials, there are resonances, opportunities exploited when the narrative presents occasion. It seems generally wise to resist any single 'reading' which attempts to deliver such a plural text up to a single organising principle. A pursuit through the surviving pageants of the places where opportunities might be expected to present themselves for teaching on the sacraments does, however, capture a diverting array of equivocations, potential subversions, and lacunae. What follows considers

¹⁸ Observations of the glass in situ, supplemented by notes available in the church.

¹⁹ HEBGIN-BARNES, *Glass of Lincolnshire*, p. 264 and p. 268.

²⁰ HEBGIN-BARNES, *Glass of Lincolnshire*, p. 304, p. 306, p. 329 and Plate 20.

²¹ RUSHFORTH, "Seven sacraments compositions", pp. 92-93. J. PAINTON COWEN, *A Guide to Stained Glass in Britain* (London, 1985), p. 252, also lists York Minster and St Michael, Spurriergate, York, as having had sequences of sacraments.

them not in the conventional order, but takes as its beginning the most obvious, the two plays that centrally narrate the inception of a sacrament.

Baptism

The Barbers' play of *The Baptism*²² is precise and complex at the level of detail, synthesising the two readings on the baptism in Matthew 3, 13-17 and John 1, 29-34, which is what also happens in gospel harmonies. From Matthew comes John's protest that Jesus should baptise him, the account of the moment of the baptism itself, and the descent of the Holy Ghost. This is the source of the common iconography of the baptism. The Baptist stands over Christ in the water and sometimes a dove hovers overhead.²³ A fragment of a scene such as this survives in the stained glass in the church of St John the Evangelist, Mickelgate, York.²⁴ Although sacraments sequences on fonts, like the Tattershall glass, generally show infant baptism, the baptism of Christ in Jordan is the eighth scene on a number of octagonal seven-sacraments fonts, second only to the crucifixion in popularity.²⁵ This is hardly surprising for not only was every Christian infant baptised, baptism was the one sacrament which could be undertaken by the laity in extremis, and Myrc's *Instructions for Parish Priests* goes into great detail about the circumstances in which midwives should baptise during a difficult birth. John's gospel provides the chronologically earlier sequence in which the Baptist identifies Jesus as the Redeemer, "*agnus Dei... qui tollit peccatum mundi*" (words which are incorporated into the ordinary of the Mass) and as the Deity, existing outside of time: "*Post me venit vir qui ante me factus est*".

The pageant, however, opens with the character of the Baptist complaining about the difficulty of converting the populace. His first three stanzas, closely following John, explore the interrelationship between conversion, witness and

²² *The Baptism*, play XXI (The Barbers), *The York Plays*, ed. R. BEADLE (London, 1983), pp. 181-186.

²³ See, for example, the scene imaginatively arranged to occupy one of the Norwich Cathedral roof bosses: M. ROSE and J. HEDGE COE, *Stories in Stone: the Medieval Roof Carvings of Norwich Cathedral* (London, 1997), p. 128, in which Christ is accompanied by a man removing his hose and waiting to be the next to be baptised.

²⁴ F. HARRISON, *The Painted Glass of York: an Account of the Medieval Glass of the Minster and the Parish Churches* (London, 1927), p. 186.

²⁵ NICHOLS, *Seetable Signs*, p. 317. See also: TASKER, *Encyclopaedia*, pp. 195-201, for illustrations of a number of sacraments sequences.

prophecy. The speech is one of many in the cycle with ambiguous deixis, ostensibly addressed to God, but as the Baptist is reporting on how he preaches that people should prepare themselves for baptism, he is also indirectly instructing the audience:

Loke þou make þe redy – ay saide I –
 Vnto oure lord God most of myght,
 Þat is þat þou be clene haly
 In worde, in worke ay redy dight
 Agayns oure lord,
 With parfite liffe þat ilke a wight
 Be well restored.

For if we be clene in levyng,
 Oure bodis are Goddis tempyll þan.
 In the whilke he will make his dwellyng.
 Therfore be clene, bothe wiffe and man,
 Þis is my reed;
 God will make in yowe haly þan
 His wonnyng-steed.²⁶

Increasingly, desire to instruct about the sacrament appears to vanquish historical verisimilitude. The Baptist goes on:

Bot wele I wote, baptyme is tane
 To wasshe and clense man of synne,
 And wele I wotte þat synne is none
 In hym, withoute ne withinne.²⁷

The Lay Folks' Catechism defines baptism in similar terms, also giving prominence to the correctness of the words which must be said in the sacrament:

I baptise the in the name
 Of the Fadir & the Son, & the Hali Gast.²⁸

²⁶ *Baptism*, Play XXI, ll. 29-42.

²⁷ *Baptism*, Play XXI, ll. 77-80.

²⁸ John Thoresby, *Lay Folks' Catechism*, p. 62. Trinity MS, ll. 286-287.

Inevitably in the pageant too the exact words are repeated by the Baptist, heedless of the anomaly that Jesus is being baptised in his own name.²⁹ The *Catechism* emphasises the role of holy water:

Another is, that it be done anely in water,
For nanother licour is leuefull tharfore,³⁰

and it is Jesus in the pageant who accordingly pronounces,

þe vertue of my baptyme dwelle
In baptyme-watir euere and ay ...³¹

Both texts clearly derive their instructions for the procedure of the sacrament from the liturgical *Manuale*³² which places great importance on the preparation of the font, the water, and, in certain seasons, the holy oil. The pageant also twice asserts the connection between baptism and Judgement, both personal and general, first when John prophesies that Jesus “*schall giffe batyme more entire/ In fire and gaste*”,³³ referring specifically to Pentecost, and secondly when Jesus’ own voice, at the end of the pageant, promises:

What man þat trowis and baptised bes
Schall saued be and come to blisse.
Whoso trowes noȝt, to payne endles
He schal be dampned sone, trowe wele þis.³⁴

John the Baptist in his camel skin is a popular figure in contemporary York sequences of saints: for example he features in windows in All Saints, North Street and the Minster, as well as being the subject of one of the miniatures in the so-called Bolton Hours, owned by a family from within York mercantile elite in the first half of the fifteenth century.³⁵ Despite some textual confusion around line 80, at the moment when Christ appears, enough of the play text survives to show how it is constructed as a clear visual representation of the

²⁹ *Baptism*, Play XXI, ll. 149-150.

³⁰ John Thoresby, *Lay Folks’ Catechism*, p. 62. Trinity MS, ll. 288-289.

³¹ *Baptism*, Play XXI, ll. 101-102.

³² *Manuale et processionale ad usum insignis ecclesiae Eboracensis* (Durham, 1875: *Surtees Society*), pp. 5-22.

³³ *Baptism*, Play XXI, ll. 12-13.

³⁴ *Baptism*, Play XXI, ll. 162-165.

³⁵ York Minster Library MS 2. J.A. KNOWLES, *The York School of Glass-Painting* (London, 1936), p. 86.

baptism of Christ by John as well as instruction on the meaning of the detailed content of the event from the ultimate authority.

Eucharist

The Last Supper is the other complete pageant which has to mediate the mythic narrative of the gospel account, and the church's ritual drama of re-enactment.³⁶ Both pageants have mixed liturgical parentage, drawing on gospel accounts for their narrative sequencing, but on the liturgical *Manuale* for formulaic elements in their dialogue. *The Last Supper* clearly draws on the Maundy Thursday liturgy from the *Manuale* which outlines the procedures for the foot-washing, but also has a fundamental relationship with the Ordinary of the Mass itself. The Maundy Thursday Mass was particularly elaborate as it involved the consecration and reservation of a second host for use on Good Friday when no consecration could take place.

Like the baptism play, this episode begins by going back to explain where the sacrament about to be enacted comes from. This involves extrapolating on the meaning of the Passover feast, which the Eucharist supplanted as type of sacrifice, drawing directly on Exodus 12. There follows a disquisition from Christ on the Old and New Laws. Before the sacrament is instituted, however, the play follows the narrative sequence from the gospel sources and presents the specific Maundy Thursday ritual of the foot-washing. It is dealt with economically, and seems to draw on John 13 which supplies the antiphons for the Mass on Maundy Thursday. The stage direction at line 60, "*Tunc lauat manus*", the detail that Christ washed his own hands after washing the feet of his disciples, demonstrates a degree of attention to detail here. The following leaf in the manuscript, which Richard Beadle calculates contained 53 lines dealing with the whole of the institution of the Eucharist,³⁷ has been removed. The action resumes with Christ's prediction of the betrayal and passion, drawing now on Mark 14 for the warning to the disciples of their future need to defend themselves when the "shepherd" has gone.

There is no way of knowing how the institution of the Eucharist would have been enacted, except, given the confined space available for performance, that it must have been economical and straightforward in its verbal content at least. A Last Supper scene set out with the disciples at table is familiar from

³⁶ *The Last Supper*, play XXVII (The Bakers), *York Plays*, ed. BEADLE, pp. 228-233.

³⁷ BEADLE, *York Plays*, pp. 230-231.

many visual representations of the period, and could have been what was represented in the play. Visual representations rarely show them around the table, perhaps because of the difficulties of perspective, but tend to show them lined up along one side of a long table.³⁸ It could equally have been that the disciples lined up standing, then kneeling to receive the sacrament, as Rosemary Woolf believes may have been the case with the *N-Town* play and as shown in Fra Angelico's *Last Supper* in the convent of San Marco.³⁹ The only clue is that Jesus says, "array *ȝou all on rawe*"⁴⁰ before the foot-washing, which points to something more explicitly ritualised than a gathering round a table. But in focusing on this play for instruction on the sacrament of the altar we may be making the same mistake as the owner of the hand that removed the leaf.

As one might expect in plays designed to embellish the feast of *Corpus Christi*, we can find that the impact of the sacrament of the altar is not restricted to a single pageant but is threaded through the whole cycle like the streams of blood from Christ's wounded side which unite seven sacraments sequences in stained glass. The scene which most commonly represents the sacrament of the altar in visual representations, from those found on East Anglian fonts, to the famous Antwerp altarpiece by Van der Weyden, is not the Last Supper but the moment of elevation of the host, conducted by a priest in dalmatics with a kneeling congregation looking on.

In the medieval Mass, the moment of elevation was brightly lit, accompanied by pealing bells and burning incense. The onlooking laity were encouraged to murmur their own particular prayers. Both *The Lay Folks' Mass Book* and Myrc's *Instructions* make clear that the elevation had become a true substitute for communion for the laity, that the Mass had become an essentially voyeuristic experience.⁴¹ Fifteenth-century Books of Hours, written for the pious and affluent laity, often illustrate the host miracle known as 'the Mass of Pope Gregory', where Gregory is shown kneeling at Mass as the wounded Christ emerges from the altar as from the tomb.⁴² I have recently argued that because this was the definitive moment for the laity in the office, it is also the moment

³⁸ TASKER, *Encyclopaedia*, p. 57, cites the Somerton reredos and a wall-painting at Ashby St Ledgers for this arrangement, whereas the Norwich Cathedral roof boss (ROSE and HEDGECOE, *Stories in Stone*, p. 97) shows an 'aerial' view to the viewer standing beneath it, of the participants seated round a rectangular table.

³⁹ R. WOOLF, *The English Mystery Plays* (London, 1972), p. 233.

⁴⁰ *Last Supper*, Play XXVII, l. 19.

⁴¹ *The Lay Folks' Mass Book*, ed. T.F. SIMMONS (1879: EETS OS 71).

⁴² This is the apparent connection made in the Cartmel Fell glass. A Mass of St Gregory is also depicted in glass in All Saints, North Street, York (KNOWLES, *York School*, p. 90).

which provides the commonest focus for civic *Corpus Christi* celebrations.⁴³ It is looking upon the transformed wafer, not ingesting it, which confers so many benefits on the participant. It was claimed variously to ensure everything from freedom from oaths lightly sworn to a reduction of pain in childbirth and from toothache,⁴⁴ a day's guarantee of not going hungry, going blind, dying or even aging,⁴⁵ of finding work easy and having all sorrows cured.⁴⁶ *Corpus Christi* processions allowed the whole community to view the real presence of Christ as he moved amongst them in the streets. The laity received communion in one kind only and infrequently so in terms of the sacrament of the altar, the moment of the elevation of the host, not the communion itself, was, the liturgical climax.⁴⁷

Myrc particularly emphasises what is appropriate behaviour at the moment of elevation or "*sacring*", the moment at which God descends. Kneeling, raising hands in veneration and greeting the Lord with a prayer, of which he suggests an example beginning, "*Iesu lord, welcom thow be...*", are all part of recommended behaviour for the devout. Several texts for these paraliturgical prayers have survived, many of them in the form of lyric verses,⁴⁸ and the stri

⁴³ P.M. KING, "The York Plays and the feast of Corpus Christi: a reconsideration", *Medieval English Theatre* 22 (2002 for 2000), pp. 13-32.

⁴⁴ J. LYDGATE, "The virtues of the mass", *Minor Poems of John Lydgate I*, ed. H.N. MCCracken (1911: *EETS ES* 107), p. 119.

⁴⁵ John Myrc, *Instructions*, p. 10.

⁴⁶ *Lay Folks' Mass Book*, p. 131, l. 101 and following.

⁴⁷ R.N. SWANSON, "Problems of the priesthood in pre-Reformation England", *English Historical Review* 105 (1990), pp. 845-869, especially pp. 855-857, discusses the respective balance of power between clergy and laity in this period of increased focus on the Eucharist. The developments in this relationship centred on the cult of the Eucharist, both as a spiritual and a 'magical' event. As only the priest could consecrate, only the priest could 'make God'. The increasingly mystical element of the Mass, where each vestment, ornament, and action had its own meaning as a reminder of Christ's earthly life and sufferings, could serve only to elevate the status of the priest as Christ-maker, and increase his separation from the laity. This elevation of the priest as consecrator clearly meshed with the acceptance of the host as Christ, which came close to (and for Wyclif was) idolatry. The veneration of the host was a burgeoning element in the spirituality of the late Middle Ages, which tied in intimately with the developing cult of Corpus Christi.

⁴⁸ John Myrc, *Instructions*, p. 9, l. 265. Still the most useful collation of the sub-genre is: R.H. ROBBINS, "Levation prayers in Middle English verse", *Modern Philology* 40 (1942-1943), pp. 131-146. Robbins noted that these prayers were quintessentially a vernacular accretion to spiritual literature, being either the only vernacular items in Latin manuscripts, or turning up in miscellany of what he called "household devotions". Levation prayers, then, were primarily a native growth, the result of this emotional need for expression in the mother-tongue of deep personal thoughts by the worshippers rather than mere translations of well-known Latin prayers.

king factor about the surviving corpus of English elevation prayers is the degree of consensus in their rhetorical formulation. They all take the form of a greeting, almost always prefaced by "Hail" or "Welcome". Christ was being greeted in person as his presence reaffirmed the active bond between heaven and earth, the forgiveness of sin guaranteed by his sacrifice which was about to be re-enacted by the celebrating clergy. There are several formal greetings in the *York Plays* which superficially conform to the formulae employed by elevation prayers. Most are addressed to Christ. What I argue in this connection in brief is that it is the verbal combined with the visual effects of each appearance of Christ which, in pageants attributable to a number of different hands, create dramatic moments not merely recollective of New Testament history, but intentionally analogous to the process of transubstantiation. The sacrament of the altar in this respect is the focus not only of one pageant, but of the whole cycle. Different types of mimetic allusions to the sacrament of the altar point to the complex nexus of ritual and drama which is there to be explored in the cycle. *The Last Supper* is a simple dramatic enactment of the institution of the Eucharist, as Christ broke bread (probably) and uttered the words of the officiating priest, "This is my body ...". Elsewhere the cycle seems to mediate the transformational power of the ritual's meaning, however. Why settle for looking at a wafer when you can look at God's body? Hence I would argue that the real affirmation of the sacrament of the altar lies not here but much more explosively in York's unique and simple *Nativity* play, where the Virgin Mary the moment she has given birth greets the Word made flesh with the words of greeting conventionally uttered at the moment of the elevation of the host:

Hayle my lord God, hayle prince of pees,
 Hayle my fadir, and hayle my sone;
 Hayle souerayne sege all synns to sesse,
 Hayle God and man in erth to wonne.
 Hayle, thurgh whos myht
 All pis worlde was first begonne,
 Merknes and light.⁴⁹

How these lines were originally staged remains an interesting question.

(pp. 132-133) See also: IDEM, "Popular prayers in Middle English verse", *MP* 36 (1938-1939), pp. 337-350. IDEM, "Private prayers in Middle English verse", *SP* 36 (1939), pp. 466-475. IDEM, "The Gurney series of religious lyrics", *PMLA* 54 (1939), pp. 369-390.

⁴⁹ *The Nativity*, Play XIV (The Tilethatchers), ll. 57-63.

Penance

Other instances of catechitical instruction on the sacraments have to be looked for. The episode of the *Woman taken in Adultery* is the most promising and obvious location for instruction on the correct conduct of the sacrament of confession.⁵⁰ Yet again there is a missing leaf, about 58 lines this time, covering the critical moments, the intervention of Jesus and his writing on the ground. The play ostensibly takes an individual contravention of one of the Commandments and sees its perpetrator through a process of acknowledgement of the sin, contrition and forgiveness conditional upon the non-continuance of the sin. This process is contextualised by the surrounding action within another explication of the New Law. The gospel account is prominent in the Lenten liturgy. Peter Meredith has pointed out in his examination of the *N-Town* version of the episode, that not only is the gospel text presented in full as the reading for the Saturday of the fourth week in Lent, but quotations and key phrases from it are repeated elsewhere in this part of the season as antiphons.⁵¹

In the York cycle what embellishment there is of the gospel text is confined to the initial debate amongst the Jews and the closing exchange between Christ and his apostles. The closing moments in particular seem to offer a reading that is different in emphasis from the traditional patristic interpretation. According to traditional interpretations, for instance St Augustine's *Tractatus xxxiii* on John, the episode's main burden is as an illustration of the separability of sin from individual sinner.⁵² The York pageant shifts emphasis to a discussion of the opportunity for pardon as a communal experience, such as was institutionalised in the parish activity of systematically hearing confession during the season of Lent. As the woman departs, she addresses not Christ but the audience, opening out her lesson into the realm of general public experience:

All erthely folke in feere
Loves hym and his high name,
Pat me on þis manere
Hath saued fro synne and schame.⁵³

⁵⁰ *The Woman taken in Adultery*, Play XXIV (The Cappers), *York Plays*, ed. BEADLE, pp. 199-205.

⁵¹ P. MEREDITH, "'Nolo Mortem' and the *Ludus Coventriae* play of the Woman taken in Adultery", *Medium Aevum* 38 (1969), pp. 38-54.

⁵² Augustine, *Tractatus 33 in Joanne*, ed. MIGNE, *PL* 35, col. 1650.

⁵³ *Woman taken in Adultery*, Play XXIV, ll. 71-74.

The final dialogue between Jesus and the first and second apostles begins by celebrating Christ's role as saviour of sinners, but moves on to emphasise man's role as agent as well as recipient in the process of administering mercy:

A, maistir, here may men se also
How mekenes may full mekill amende,
To forgeue gladly where we goo
All folke pat hath vs oght offende.⁵⁴

The dramatist seems to promote a reading of the episode in which the woman is not foregrounded primarily as an individual case history, as she is in other dramatic versions of the episode. It seems rather that the opening and closing scenes of the pageant may place the focus on the role of the institution of the church in relation to sin in the community. The Jewish priests at the opening are representatives of the Old Law, whereas Christ's instruction to his apostles at the end demonstrates something of how the New Law is to be operated as a code of social behaviour. The pattern reflects the shift from "*Synagoga*" to "*Ecclesia*". And under the New Law, man can be both agent and patient, forgiven and forgiver, and the apostolic church will perform its role in this through the administration of the sacrament of confession to the whole Christian community.

Baptism, communion and penance are the three sacraments one would expect to find more widely distributed in instruction on the faith to the laity. Baptism is the most domesticated of the sacraments, the one in which the lay-person could be agent as well as patient. Confession, or, more widely, the whole operation of penance, is a different sacrament, not an occasion but, for the devout, a continuous process of which the receipt of the sacrament of the altar was the culmination or satisfaction. The other sacraments are less easily located in the cycle. For example, the occasion to discuss ordination does not obviously present itself, and might be seen as inappropriate for a lay audience to consider in detail in any case.

⁵⁴ *Woman taken in Adultery*, Play XXIV, ll. 87-90.

Matrimony

That should not be the case where matrimony is concerned. Whether or not actual instruction on the sacrament of matrimony was available within the cycle is arguable. According to the argument about accessibility and relevance to the laity advanced above, it should be. Yet the text of the cycle at no point stops to extol the virtues of this sacrament. Indeed the picture of marriage available within the *text* of the York cycle, if it is read as a mediation of the church's view on the sacrament, seems to suggest that the married state is not desirable at all.

The conventional archetype of the sacrament is the first marriage between Adam and Eve, but we look in vain for any formulation of the sacrament in the words of the Cardmakers' play of the *Creation*.⁵⁵ This is not necessarily to say that it is not there, but it depends heavily on the performative aspect of God's long speech as he creates Eve for Adam, upon the belief that there are within it triggers for action which may no longer operate convincingly but which suggested a definite sequence of moves to the original producers of the play.⁵⁶

To kepe þis warlde, bothe mare and lesse,
A skylfull best þane will I make
Eftyr my schape and my lyknes,
The wilke sall worschipe to me take.

Off þe symplest part of erthe þat is here
I sall make man, and for þis skylle:
For to abate hys hauttande chere,
Bothe his gret pride and oþer ille;

And also for to haue in mynde
How simpyll he is at hys makyng,
For als febyll I sall hym fynde
Qwen he is dede at his endyng.

For þis reson and skylle alane
I sall make man lyke onto me.
Ryse vp, þou erthe, in blode and bane,
In schape of man, I commaunde þe.

A female sail þou hane to fere,

⁵⁵ *The Creation*, Play III (The Cardmakers), *York Plays*, ed. BEADLE, pp. 58-61.

⁵⁶ I am indebted to discussions with Meg Twycross, based on her experience of reconstructing productions of mystery plays, for this section of my argument.

Her sall I make of þi lyft rybe,
 Alane so sall þou nough be here
 Withoutyn faythefull frende and sybe.

Takys now here þe gast of lyffe
 And ressayue both ȝoure saules of me;
 þis femall take þou to þi wyffe,
 Adam and Eue ȝour names sall be.⁵⁷

The question arises then, that if the moment in the action was offered gesturally as a recognisable ritual, how does that effect the audience's reception of the play and could it be described as offering instruction on the sacrament? Can text combined with action of a certain kind release layers of new available instructional readings? Certainly this is one argument for the research value of reconstructed performance.

In representations of the sacrament of marriage in the visual arts, the moment almost always shown is the handfasting, where the priest joins the right hands of the couple, as in the glass at Cartmel Fell described above. In most the bride is to the celebrant's right, the groom to his left. In others the bride and groom stand side by side to one side of the celebrant. Nichols believes that the model for the pattern is the iconographic representation of the union of Adam and Eve in Eden.⁵⁸ According to her argument, visual presentation of the sacraments can take three forms which it is important to distinguish: they can be illustrative, where a particular historical instance of the administration of the sacrament is shown. They can be typological, and all the sacraments have a biblical typology in some schema such as the Grenier tapestry (Burgundian 1474) and the woodblocks in Verard's *Lart de bien vivre et bien mourir*. Or they can be theological, that is non-specific as to time, place or person, where nothing is added to detract from the essential ritual action. For marriage, Adam and Eve can be read typologically, along with the espousal of Mary and Joseph, and probably based on the account of the marriage of Sarah and Tobias in Tobias 7, 15, but there is no other evidence in the cycle for a typology of the sacraments. The marriage of Adam and Eve was, however, also taken as the origin of the sacrament, functioning therefore, like the baptism and the Last Supper by uniting the illustrative and theological functions of the portrayal. This play differs, however, from baptism and Last Supper, as there is no ac-

⁵⁷ *The Creation*, Play III, ll. 21-44.

⁵⁸ NICHOLS, *Seeable Signs*, p. 279.

companying verbal instruction on the sacrament, nor any echo of its verbal forms.

It could be argued that the verbal forms are deferred, and crop up later and less auspiciously in the process of the expulsion from Eden, when Adam, fully supported by the attendant angel who says they were both fools, maintains that the Fall occurred because Eve did not obey him:

Eue Sethyn it was so me knyth it sore,
 Bot sethyn that woman wittiles ware
 Mans maistrie shulde haue bene more
 Ageyns þe gilte.
 Adam Nay, at my speche wolde þou never spare,
 þat has vs spilte.
 Eue Iff I hadde spoken youe oughte to spill
 Ye shulde haue taken gode tent þeretyll,
 And turnyd my þought...⁵⁹

The marriage vows are then contextualised as a remedy for the mistakes of Eden. The cycle thereafter is full of famously dysfunctional marriages to which the rather unusual relationship between Joseph and Mary is offered as the only counter. Marriages in the cycle, far from presenting the audience with an opportunity to contemplate the nature of the sacrament, seem to provide the major opportunities for burlesque. There is no systematic instruction on the sacraments in the cycle. Resonances were taken up as opportunities to offer stock catechitical material, or not, when there was more to be gained dramatically from playing it differently. We should, however, pause briefly to acknowledge another lacuna. The text of Play XXIIA, *Marriage at Cana*, does not survive, but is reported to have begun with the archdecyne (master of ceremonies) saying, "*Lo this joyful day*". It is referred to as the marriage attended by Christ in the modern form of the marriage liturgy, and the play could have included some sort of prefatory enactment of the sacrament, though the episode more commonly illustrates the sacrament of the altar for the lay audience. At any rate the play was never registered, despite demands as late as 1557 that it should be.

⁵⁹ *Adam and Eve in Eden*, Play VI (The Armourers), *York Plays*, ed. BEADLE, pp. 62-69, ll. 135-143.

Extreme unction

Another missing pageant with exactly the same status as the *Marriage at Cana* is *Jesus at the House of Simon the Leper*, which draws upon Matthew 26, 6-13, where Mary Magdalen anoints Christ's head with oil.⁶⁰ In answer to the protestations of the disciples, Christ replies that she was preparing him for burial. His simple argument for the purchase of costly oil to honour the soon to die rather than supporting the poor who will always be with us, reads as an opportunity to defend the sacramental offices of the church over the evangelical. The play could, therefore have presented instruction on the sacrament of extreme unction, though it would hardly have looked like the classic death-bed scene standard in the iconography of the sacrament.

The sacrament of extreme unction had come in practice frequently to be neglected in favour of *viaticum*.⁶¹ The importance of death-bed shriving often left little time for the anointing of the dying. The sacrament of extreme unction is, like the office of the dead, not well represented in art by any securely standardised iconography. When it is shown, the anointing is applied to various parts of the body, sometimes the feet, breast, head, hand or the sensory organs.⁶² The anointing and burial of Christ, especially the *pieta* scene and the ensuing entombment was sometimes taken as the archetype of the sacrament. In these compositions Joseph of Arimathea is shown anointing Christ who lies on a pallet or shroud and Mary Magdalen is often herself present here too.⁶³

⁶⁰ *Jesus at the House of Simon the Leper*, Play XXIII (The Ironmongers), *York Plays*, ed. BEADLE, p. 198.

⁶¹ NICHOLS, *Seeable Signs*, p. 301. For example, in the Seven Sacraments glass at Doddiscombeleigh, illustrated in: TASKER, *Encyclopaedia*, p. 196, the priest at the deathbed is clearly administering the Mass wafer, not anointing the dying man at all. This is also the case in the Cartmel Fell glass, mentioned above.

⁶² TASKER, *Encyclopaedia*, p. 198, shows a carving from Gresham in Norfolk where the priest anoints the dying man's feet under the bedclothes, and on the bed there is a dish on which four wisps of wool are arranged in the form of a cross. DUFFY, *Stripping of the Altars*, plate 116, shows the font from Badingham, Suffolk, where the priest is anointing the dying man's forehead.

⁶³ Most commonly found in sequences of manuscript miniatures illustrating scenes from the life of Christ, for example in the late fifteenth-century Book of Hours of Sarum use, Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 56, fol. 46 (K. SCOTT, *Later Gothic Manuscripts: A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles* (London, 1996), I, plate 452, II, cat. 123). Here Joseph of Arimathea is anointing the dead Christ's legs while the grieving Virgin, Mary Cleophas, Mary Salome and Nicodemus look on on one side of the bier, and Mary Magdalen kneels with another ointment pot next to her on the ground on the other side. Joseph of Arimathea is also shown anointing the dead Christ in the glass in Canterbury Cathedral (TASKER, *Encyclopaedia*, p. 65).

Again this moment is seen not as a type of unction but as the origin of the sacrament. Christ's burial was part of the redemptive act and therefore of itself sacramental.

In the Butchers' play, *The Death of Christ*, there is no opportunity for a pieta scene: the Virgin has already been led away by Mary Cleophas and John before the body is taken down.⁶⁴ Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea are left alone to perform the rites for the body when they have persuaded Pilate to part with it. Nicodemus promises to "*dresse him with dedis full dewe*" and Joseph produces a winding sheet. Nicodemus then says:

Seere oynementis here haue I
Brought for þis faire body,
I anoynte þe forthy
With myrre and aloes.

Joseph responds:

þis dede is done ilke a dele
And wroughte is þis werke wele iwis.⁶⁵

References to the sacrament of extreme unction seem to occur in a number of other places. Christ is born to die, so verbal and visual resonances of the sacrament associated with bodily death are spread throughout cycle in a number of scenes, from the magus bearing myrrh in a crism who says

...whan thy dedys ar done to dye is þi dette
And sen thy body beryed shal be,
This mirre will I giffe to þi grauyng.⁶⁶

through the anointing by Mary Magdalen at the house of Simon the Leper, to the later scene in the Winedrawers' *Hortulanus* where the Magdalen meets the risen Christ walking in the garden to which she has come, according to standard iconography, bearing another crism of oil.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ *The Death of Christ*, Play XXXVI (The Butchers), *York Plays*, ed. BEADLE, pp. 323-333.

⁶⁵ *Death of Christ*, Play XXXVI, ll. 400-406.

⁶⁶ *Herod and the Magi*, Play XVI (The Goldsmiths), *York Plays*, ed. BEADLE, pp. 134-148, l. 340.

⁶⁷ *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene*, Play XXXIX (The Winedrawers), *York Plays*, ed. BEADLE, pp. 356-359, ll. 42-49.

A mourning figure is regularly featured in the deathbed scene in sacraments sequences, as part of the larger meaning of the sacrament of extreme unction is that it brings with it the consolation of the general resurrection. Many scenes in the cycle are united by voices raised proleptically, and in the case of the Magdalen analeptically, in echoes of the Virgin's planctus: for example the mothers of the innocents, the Virgin herself when she must flee into Egypt so that her son will not be killed, the sisters of Lazarus, the other death and resurrection in the cycle. Lament, like sacramental greeting, is another dominant mode which unites the plays. Much of this elaborates dramatically on the sacramental meaning of extreme unction without necessarily offering overt instruction.

Confirmation

That leaves confirmation which presents a much more interesting case. Only one child is presented to the church hierarchy in the cycle and that is Christ. On the first occasion the play is *The Purification of the Virgin*.⁶⁸ Although in the Middle Ages confirmation did take place with very young children, the mother's purification was a separate ritual undertaken within forty days of the birth. The episode in the cycles where Simeon and Anna receive the Virgin and Christ at the temple is, however, sometimes entitled the *Presentation at the Temple*, and even York's so-called *Purification* play focuses more upon Simeon's reception of the infant than upon the ritual cleansing of, and receipt of gifts from, the mother.

What's more, when the infant Christ is received in the temple in this play, it appears that the sacramental benefit is not conferred by the priest upon the infant but the other way around. For Simeon instantly experiences many of the symptoms attributed to witnessing transubstantiation by contemporary commentators. He feels

light as leyf on tree,
My age is went, I feyll no fray⁶⁹

⁶⁸ *The Purification of the Virgin*, Play XVII (The Hatmakers, Masons and Labourers), *York Plays*, ed. BEADLE, pp. 149-160.

⁶⁹ *Purification of the Virgin*, Play XVII, ll. 345-349.

in anticipation of coming into Christ's presence. He then hails the baby as if elevating the host, as son of the Virgin, son of God, protector from evil, fragrant flower, protector of great and small, rose, unfading flower, comforter.⁷⁰

And mekely I beseke the here where I kneyll
to suffre thy servant to take thee in hand⁷¹

Here he could be going through the process of crismation (anointing) and imposition (laying on of hands) which the bishop did when a child was confirmed, but equally it could be Simeon who is going through the sacramental experience as his speech replicates a liturgical process associated with communion, moving through greeting and receiving to offering thanks.

On the other occasion that the young Christ is presented to the presiding clergy he is rather old for confirmation by contemporary standards, even though the Council of Trent had urged that a child should not be confirmed until (s)he had attained the age of reason (about five). Christ's visit to the doctors in the temple is the play which, whether or not it alludes to the sacrament of confirmation – which is doubtful – most clearly illustrates and subverts the whole matter of catechesis.⁷² The audience is presented with a scene reminiscent of the examination of an adolescent of artisan parents in the basic tenets of the faith, by a venerable body of churchmen, but one where this boy can turn the tables on his examiners. Given the identity of the child, this is only to be expected. And the child does not stun the doctors with arcane theology but with knowledge so basic that any child of twelve would be expected to know it, as indeed the boy-actor playing Christ in the pageant would demonstrate. It is not the young Christ's knowledge here which is remarkable, but the doctors' incredulity which is laughable. The doctors stand for, and were almost certainly dressed to represent, the organised church which is, in performance, undermined by a young York catechumen drawn from the ranks of the craft and trading classes. Annas and Caiaphas will later be found in a similar situation, scratching their heads in wonder at how a mere carpenter's son could know so much and be able to steal their congregations with his preaching.⁷³ The cycle frequently seems deliberately to situate the institutionalised church as the butt

⁷⁰ *Purification of the Virgin*, Play XVII, ll. 358-427.

⁷¹ *Purification of the Virgin*, Play XVII, ll. 374-375.

⁷² *Christ and the Doctors*, Play XX (The Spurries and Lorimers), *York Plays*, ed. BEADLE, pp. 174-181.

⁷³ *Christ before Pilate 1: The Dream of Pilate's Wife*, Play XXX (The Tapiters and Couchers), *York Plays*, ed. BEADLE, pp. 254-270, ll. 502-505.

of parody, as churchmen, identified by their clothing, are wrong-footed by the people's Christ and his followers.

Conclusion

This exploration has indeed revealed "a diverting array of equivocations, potential parodies, subversions, and lacunae". Where the seven sacraments are concerned, there appears to be evidence of the enactment of two for sure, but both plays are imperfect texts. The leaf which would have contained the institution of the Eucharist in *The Last Supper* has been torn out, and, although in *The Baptism* no pages are missing, the scribe has indicated, at the point when Jesus' cue for entry is required, that "*here wants a pece*", and has written next to the subsequent speech by Jesus, "*de novo facto*", indicating some reworking around the time of John Clerke's emendations in the early sixteenth century.

Further, we may be reasonably secure that the *Woman taken in Adultery* concerns confession, but there again a page has been removed from the register. Instruction on marriage and extreme unction is less localised and direct. In the case of marriage, there was almost certainly gestural allusion to the sacrament at the moment when Adam and Eve are united by God, but the words of the sacrament are deferred until that union is under strain, and there is little further in the cycle to affirm the efficacy of the sacrament. Elements of the rarer sacramental rite of extreme unction are present in the scene concerning the burial of Christ, but are also distributed throughout the cycle as all Christ's life anticipates the death which is no death at all. The case of confirmation may be similar: it is not the infant that must be sanctified by the church, but the church by the infant. Yet the cycle as a whole remains broadly sacramental, particularly in its association with *Corpus Christi* and its treatment of the appearances of Christ's body.

The York cycle can very readily seem to be a text fragmented against itself, deeply even formulaically ingrained in orthodoxy, yet offering numerous opportunities for critique of that orthodoxy in performance. Potentially instructional material on some elements of orthodox faith sit in the manuscript side by side with evidence of layers of *ad hoc* alteration and expurgation. As we infer that all parts were played by members of the laity – though we don't absolutely know – the sacramental elements in the cycle would have been performed by men who came from outside the church's charmed circle, just as in the play of *Pentecost* the gift of evangelism is conferred on the apostles while doctors of

the church jealously stand by and act as detractors.⁷⁴ What was (probably) written by clerics seems to have had the potential in performance for turning into a statement of anti-clericalism, casting the clergy as “*Synagoga*” to the city’s “*Ecclesia*”, by visual inference at least. The cycle seems to yield opportunities for playing the exclusivity of the institutionalised church, and nowhere more so than in its presentation of, and commentary on, ecclesiastical ritual, even though it also offers straight affirmative instruction on the meaning of those rituals.

Among the puzzles posed by a tantalising inscrutable manuscript is the question of who removed the page which contained the institution of the Eucharist and left the cycle’s Marian material intact. Perhaps the *York Register*’s now missing pages were just seen as particularly collectable, and removed to languish amidst the pages of some sixteenth-century closet roman catholic’s scrapbook, or perhaps they were really ripped out, as seems to have been the case with the *Towneley Plays*, by a protestant zealot. The York cycle is a compendium of texts sanctioned within the new orthodoxy which followed the publication of Arundel’s *Constitutions*, written by clerics and incorporating a number of different materials which the church regularly employed to instruct the laity, but as dramatic texts they are inherently unstable, as performance can be a subversive act. And the agency of this potential subversion is the social structure of the city itself. The pageants seem to enact in performance precisely the tensions of power, ownership, and authority which recent historical scholarship has essentialised in its study of late medieval York.

⁷⁴ *Pentecost*, Play XLIII (The Potters), *York Plays*, ed. BEADLE, pp. 380-385, *passim*.

London Pride: Citizenship and the Fourteenth-Century Customals of the City of London

DEBBIE CANNON

In the first half of the fourteenth century at least four of the manuscript compilations of urban and national laws and customs now held by the Corporation of London Record Office and categorised as 'customals' were produced in London.¹ Only one of the customals now held by the CLRO predates this period, and by 1495 a further five had been completed, making the early fourteenth century a period of exceptional productivity for the civic customal in London.² This essay will focus on two of these customals compiled between 1300 and 1328, for which surviving documentary evidence has provided substantial information on their original content and structure and the

¹ London, Corporation of London Record Office, Custumal 2, the *Liber Horn*, Custumal 3, the *Liber memorandorum*, Custumal 5, the *Liber ordinationum*, and Custumal 6, the *Liber customarum*. Most of the contents of these manuscripts are described in: N. KER, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, 5 volumes (Oxford, 1969), I, pp. 20-22 (the *Liber customarum*), pp. 27-35 (the *Liber Horn*) and pp. 35-41 (the *Liber ordinationum*). The *Liber memorandorum* is discussed more briefly by Ker on p. 35, and is the only one of these four manuscripts which may have been completed in the second half of the fourteenth century. The Corporation of London Record Office will be referred to hereafter as the CLRO. I would like to thank the staff of the CLRO, and of the British Library and of Corpus Christi College Library, Cambridge, where I also consulted manuscripts in the course of pursuing this research, for their friendly and knowledgeable assistance.

² London, CLRO, Custumal 1, the *Liber de antiquis legibus*, was completed in around 1274, and London, CLRO, Custumal 4, the *Liber de assisa panis*, Custumal 7, the *Cartae antiquae*, Custumal 8, the *Statuta antiquae Angliae*, Custumal 10, the *Liber Dunthorn* and Custumal 12, the *Liber albus*, were all completed by 1495.

circumstances surrounding their production – the *Liber Horn* and the *Liber Legum Regum Antiquorum*, compiled by the London fishmonger and chamberlain, Andrew Horn.³ However, the essay will also deal with a selection of manuscripts which, while they contain very similar collections of contents to the customals of the CLRO, are most commonly categorised by modern cataloguers as ‘commonplace books’, a term indicative of their probable private compilation and ownership by individual citizens in the Middle Ages, and their possession by non-governmental archives in the modern period.⁴ I will argue that the essential similarities between these two categories of manuscript indicate that they represent manifestations of a common type of text, but also that their simultaneous association with the public and the private, identified for the specific purposes of this argument with ownership by government or by an individual or family, became a characteristic of the customal in the fourteenth century.

The first three sections of the essay will consider the contents and, more briefly, the structure, presentation, and possible functions of first Andrew Horn’s two customals, and then of a number of very similar privately owned books produced in this period, to allow us to establish more clearly the characteristics of this genre. The third section of the essay will examine how this more inclusive characterisation of the civic customal helps us to define the significance of its relative popularity in London during this period, concentrating on two main themes. Discussion of the content and the background to the production of these books will enable us first to gain a better idea of the nature of their audience and readership, and to assess their significance as evidence of urban literacy. Opportunities for the development of literate skills were increasing in England’s cities in the fourteenth century, and “from the twelfth

³ This essay is derived from my D.Phil. thesis: D.J.S. O’BRIEN, “*The Veray Registre of All Trouthe*”: *The Content, Function, and Character of the Civic Registers of London and York c.1274-c.1482* (unpublished D.Phil. dissertation, University of York, 1999), in which this argument, and the characterisation of the medieval civic register, are continued in greater detail.

⁴ In fact the term ‘customal’ does not appear in English as a mode of describing a documentary genre until the sixteenth century, and although one of the London customals is titled the *Liber costumarum*, a comparable Latin term does not appear to have been used as a general descriptive term for these or other books. The *OED* dates its first citation of “*customal*” in 1570-1576: *OED* *customal* sb. The *MED* gives “*customal*” as an adjective, meaning “habitual”, but not as a noun: *MED* *customal* adj (1). Similarly, both the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, ed. W. ROTHWELL, L.W. STONE and T.B.W. REID (London, 1992), and the *Dictionnaire de l’ancienne Française et de tous ses dialectes du ix^e au xve siècle*, ed. F. GODEFROY, 10 volumes (Nedeln, 1883, reprinted 1969), give “*custumel*” or “*costumel*” only as an adjective.

century onward [...] the history of lay literacy is dominated by the steady growth of literacy among the expanding middle class".⁵ This social group is considered to have developed their skills in reading and writing through exposure to documentary and business writing, for which M.B. Parkes has coined the term 'pragmatic literacy'.⁶ However, until relatively recently many modern scholars – although not including Parkes – have tended to concur in arguing that urban, mercantile readers showed little interest in employing the literacy they had developed through business on texts of a literary or other non-practical content – that "the use of their literacy and education was not often turned to intellectual ends".⁷ This essay will argue that the typical format of the civic customal as defined here, encompassing both legislation and a range of non-documentary contents, including chronicles, verse, or ceremonial description, provides important evidence of citizens of London exercising their literate skills for purposes which are not exclusively pragmatic. Second, we will be able to consider what the value of a book which in its content and its associations was by the middle of the fourteenth century closely identified with the civic government might have been to the individuals who owned them in London during this period. I will argue that the civic customal illuminates the way that writing could be used to describe and display the relationship between the citizen and his city and its government. The civic customal could be used as a means of learning the skills of not only business and law, but also citizenship.

The Customals of Andrew Horn: the Liber Horn

Andrew Horn describes himself in a colophon attached to the *Liber Horn* in 1311 as a "fishmonger of Bridgestreet in London" ("*piscenario London' de Breggestrete*") and according to references in Letter Books D and E he served the city as chamberlain from 1320 until his death in 1329.⁸ As chamberlain,

⁵ M.B. PARKES, "The literacy of the laity", in: *Literacy and Western Civilisation: The Medieval World*, ed. D. DAICHES and A. THORLBY (London, 1973), pp. 555-577, p. 557.

⁶ PARKES, "The literacy of the laity".

⁷ PARKES, "The literacy of the laity". H.J. Graff, *The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and Contradictions in Western Culture and Society* (Bloomington, 1987), p. 99. On educational opportunities in medieval London, see: S.L. THRUPE, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London [1300-1500]* (second edition; Michigan, 1989). W.J. COURTENAY, *Schools and Scholars in Fourteenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1987).

⁸ London, CLRO, Customal 2, the *Liber Horn*, fol. 206r. *Calendars of the Letter-Books of the City of London: Letter-Books A-L, 1275-1498*, ed. R.R. SHARPE, 11 volumes (London, 1899-

and a member of one of the most politically prominent crafts in the city at this time, the fishmongers, his name is frequently referred to in other city records.⁹ In the London chronicle the *Annales Paulini*, for example, the entry for 1327 describes how the new charter of liberties granted to the city of London by Edward III was “read and made public and translated into English by Andrew Horn, chamberlain of the Guildhall” (“*per andream Horn camerarium Gildhal-dae lectae et pupplicatae ac in Anglico expositae*”).¹⁰ We know from the information which he offered about himself, and from his will, enrolled in 1328-1329, that Horn owned and worked on a number of books and civic documents.¹¹ In his will, Andrew Horn bequeathed four books to the Guildhall of London:

one great book containing the ancient deeds of the English in which are contained many useful things, and one other book concerning the ancient English laws with a book called Bretoun and with the book called the Mirror of Justices, and another book compiled by Henry of Huntingdon. Also another book concerning the statutes of the English with many liberties and other matters pertaining to the city.¹²

Three extant manuscripts contain inscriptions identifying them as books owned and worked on by Horn, and Neil Ker and Jeremy Catto have presented strong evidence connecting two of the books listed in Horn's will with these

1912): the Letter Books will be abbreviated in foot-notes as *LB*, followed by the appropriate letter. *LBD*, p. 30; *LBD*, p. 231 and p. 236. Andrew Horn's name appears at regular intervals in *LBD* and *LBE*. All translations included in this essay are my own.

⁹ Gwyn Williams describes the fishmongers as “perhaps the strongest single mercantile interest, in terms of numbers and local political power, in the city” in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. G.A. WILLIAMS, *Medieval London: From Commune to Capital* (London, 1963), p. 165.

¹⁰ *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, ed. W. STUBBS, 2 volumes (London, 1882: *Rolls Series* 76), I, *Annales Londoniensis and Annales Paulini*, p. 325.

¹¹ Jeremy Catto has compiled a list of the documents on which Horn's hand has been identified, and of the texts which he owned: J. CATTO, “Andrew Horn: law and history in fourteenth century England”, in: *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Richard William Southern*, ed. R.H.C. DAVIS and J.M. WALLACE-HADRILL (Oxford, 1981), pp. 367-391, pp. 371-381.

¹² “*unum magnum librum de gestis anglorum in quo continentur multa utilia, et unum alium librum de veteribus [word omitted] anglorum cum libro vocato Bretoun et cum libro vocato speculum Jutic, et alium librum compositum per Henricum de Huntingdon[ia]. Item alium librum de statutis Anglorum cum multis libertatibus et aliis tangentibus civitatem*”. The Latin text is taken from the transcription of Jeremy Catto, from London, CLRO, Hustings Roll 57, number 16, in: CATTO, “Andrew Horn”, pp. 370-371. Andrew Horn's will appears in: *Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting, London, A.D. 1258-A.D. 1688*, ed. R.R. SHARPE, 2 volumes (London, 1890), I, pp. 344-345.

manuscripts, and a third book with a custumal the leaves of which are now dispersed between three separate manuscripts.¹³ The fourth item in the will, the “book concerning the statutes of the English with many liberties and other matters pertaining to the city”, provides a good description of the contents of the *Liber Horn*, still held in the CLRO. “*Liber horn*” has been written on the inside cover of the volume, and a fifteenth-century list of books held by the Guildhall written onto the flyleaf of Letter Book D also refers to it.¹⁴ This manuscript appears to have been produced in at least two parts, with the end of the first section being marked with a colophon naming Horn as the books’ owner, and recording that it was made for him in 1311.¹⁵ Subsequent entries have been made up until around 1318.¹⁶ The custumal contains a range of documents relating to the country and to the city of London. Copied into it are a collection of city ordinances and charters and records of contemporary legal cases, together with a comprehensive set of national statutes dealing with the legal procedure for a variety of circumstances, including the Charter of the Forest, a statute against the bringing of foreign money into the kingdom illegally, the Statute of Merchants, and the Statute of Bigamy.

A large proportion of these statutes derive from at most fifty years before the compilation of the *Liber Horn*, and some were extremely recent. The Statute of Stamford, for example, dates from 1309, and the *Liber Horn*’s copy of the Customs of Kent is considered to be one of the earliest extant.¹⁷ The collection of national laws in the *Liber Horn*, then, seems to have been compiled on the basis of contemporaneity, providing an up-to-date record of the laws of England at a time when the country’s common law was becoming standardised

¹³ CATTO, “Andrew Horn”. N. KER, “*Liber Custumarum*, and other manuscripts formerly at the Guildhall”, *Guildhall Miscellany* 3 (1954), pp. 39–42. The second volume in the list (the “one other book concerning the ancient English laws with a book called Bretoun and the book called the Mirror of Justices”) can be identified as a volume split between two manuscripts, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Library, MSS 70 and 258. Horn has written his name in both of these manuscripts: Corpus MS 70, p. 101, and MS 258, fol. 1r. They are described in: *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Corpus Christi College Cambridge*, ed. M.R. JAMES, 2 volumes (Cambridge, 1912), I, pp. 148–149, for Corpus MS 70; and II, pp. 8–9, for Corpus MS 258.

¹⁴ *LBD*, pp. 317–318.

¹⁵ London, CLRO, Custumal 2, the *Liber Horn*, fol. 206r.

¹⁶ The structure and the majority of the contents of the *Liber Horn* are catalogued in: KER, *Medieval Manuscripts*, I, pp. 27–35.

¹⁷ F. HULL, “The custumal of Kent”, *Archaeologia Carthana* 72 (1958), pp. 148–159. The Statute of Stamford appears in CLRO Custumal 2, the *Liber Horn*, on fols. 114r–115v.

and its judicial system was becoming increasingly professionalised.¹⁸ The London documentation copied into this register, which generally speaking is more roughly transcribed, similarly features royal charters dating back to that of William the Conqueror, and the city's first Assize of Buildings.¹⁹ The collection of London laws known as the "*Libertas Londoniensis*", which also appeared in the early thirteenth-century legal collection part of which survives as London, British Library, MS Additional 14252, has also been inscribed in the *Liber Horn*.²⁰ Notations made next to some of the entries in the *Liber Horn* record that the document had been verified at the Guildhall, confirming Horn's interest in the process of law-making, and contemporary legal development.

The construction of the manuscript of the *Liber Horn* shows that it was partly completed in 1311, but that Horn continued to add to it after that date, probably until around 1318. By 1319 a new table of contents had been compiled for the volume, suggesting that by this date it had, indeed, reached a stage of completion.²¹ The *Liber Horn*, then, seems to have been intended as a functional, working volume, in which Andrew Horn could compile over a period of years documents which were of interest or of relevance to him. The *Liber Horn* is decorated, with some illuminated initials and leaves, with images of fish next to documents concerning the fishmongers, and twice with a shield of arms, made up of a fish and a St Andrews cross which further identifies the manuscript with Andrew Horn. However, according to Lynda Dennison, the decorative work is "not of the highest quality".²²

Other than its immediate usefulness to Andrew Horn as a record of contemporary legal development, the *Liber Horn* seems to have been designed with another, quite specific function in mind. Next to many of its contents are notes recording that they are copied from documents located in particular

¹⁸ J. HUDSON, *The Formation of the English Common Law: Law and Society in England from the Norman Conquest to Magna Carta* (London, 1996), pp. 19-23.

¹⁹ The Building Assize was effective by 1212, see: J. SCHOFIELD, *Medieval London Houses* (New Haven, 1994), p. 4 and p. 95.

²⁰ The other part of the compilation is extant as Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS 174. See: M. BATESON, "A London municipal collection of the reign of John", *English Historical Review* 17 (1902), pp. 480-509 and pp. 707-730. KER, "*Liber Custumarum*". The "*Libertas Londoniensis*" is published in: F. LIEBERMANN, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, (Halle, 1898), pp. 673-675.

²¹ CLRO Custumal 2, the *Liber Horn*, fols. 8v-9r and fol. 14v.

²² L. DENNISON, "Liber Horn, Liber Custumarum, and the other manuscripts of the Queen Mary Psalter Workshops", in: *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology in London*, ed. L. GRANT (London, 1990: *The British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions for the Year 1984*, 10), pp. 118-134, p. 124.

books held within the Guildhall of London, usually the “*maior liber niger*”, the “*parvus liber niger*”, or the “*ruber liber camere Gildaule Lond*”, alternative names for some of the *Letter Books*, with folio numbers often being given in addition.²³ Even before Horn gained official jurisdiction over London’s archive as chamberlain, then, the *Liber Horn* seems to have been designed to function as a kind of unofficial referencing system to its rapidly expanding collection of documents at the beginning of the fourteenth century. We must assume that even in his non-official relationship with London’s government before 1320, he had ready access to the records of London’s Guildhall, in order to compile the *Liber Horn*, and to be aware of which documents had been formally verified there. The very contemporaneity of Andrew Horn’s custumal makes it almost impossible that it could have been copied from an earlier compilation.

More importantly, the *Liber Horn* organised the city’s documents in its own text, and, by identifying the volumes in which they were held, in the archive. In 1419, the common clerk John Carpenter described the archive in London’s Guildhall as a “*chaos*” and an “*inextricable labyrinth*” (“*inextricabilem laborintum*”), and while the volume and disorder of the city’s records must undoubtedly have increased dramatically in the hundred years following Horn’s chamberlainship, it seems likely that it would still have been daunting in 1320.²⁴ Intellectual, if not physical, organisation of documentary material which probably lay in a disordered form amongst the records of the Guildhall seems to be a key function of Horn’s manuscript collections.²⁵ Despite its periodic production, and sometimes informal presentation, the *Liber Horn* is methodically divided into three “*partes*” by titles, and contains several separate tables of contents for different sections of the collection. Even in this manuscript where decoration and presentation have apparently received less attention than the need to include as much information as possible on the folios, the potential of this kind of volume for organising material, and making it more accessible, has not been forgotten. For Andrew Horn, this was clearly a further intrinsic function of the privately held civic custumal.

²³ See, for example: CLRO Custumal 2, the *Liber Horn*, fol. 203r.

²⁴ London, CLRO, Custumal 12, the *Liber albus*, fol. 264r.

²⁵ Although, see: G. MARTIN, “English town records, 1200-1350”, in: *Pragmatic Literacy, East and West 1200-1330*, ed. R. BRITNELL (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 119-130.

The Custumals of Andrew Horn: the Liber Legum Regum Antiquorum

The first volume described in Horn's will, the "one great book concerning the ancient deeds of the English in which are contained many useful things" has been identified by Catto and Ker as the *Liber legum regum antiquorum*, referred to from now on as the *Liber regum*. It has been located by Ker and Catto split between three extant manuscripts, and intermingled with the leaves of another fourteenth-century custumal, the *Liber custumarum*.²⁶ A table of contents for the original *Liber regum*, now in Oxford, Oriel College Library, MS 46, helps to resolve some of the confusion caused by this reorganisation.²⁷ It records that the *Liber regum* contained a range of royal records, including the Magna Carta; the statutes of Merton, Marlborough, Westminster, and Gloucester; a collection of royal charters to the city of London beginning with William I's charter written in English; and the "*Leges Anglorum*", a series of statutes allegedly issued by English kings from Ine to Henry II.²⁸

It also included a variety of documents dealing directly with the city, such as the regulations for the assizes of bread and wine, and for the Festival of the Pui, a mercantile society in which members competed for the title of prince with songs or poems;²⁹ craft ordinances, including the fishmongers'; statutes for foreign merchants; and a list of London's mayors, sheriffs, chamberlains, and coroners, from 1276 up until 1321. None of the other contents of the volume post-date 1321, and on this basis it can be deduced that the *Liber regum* must have been produced at around this time. Most unusually, the manuscript seems to have included in a self-contained quire at its beginning an Anglo-Norman translation of the sections of Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* describing the cities, rivers and peoples of Britain; William Fitz Stephen's twelfth-century description of London; and selections from *Li livres dou tresor*, a compilation mainly of classical, didactic material, written between 1260 and

²⁶ Published as Parts 1 and 2 of *Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis: Liber albus, Liber custumarum et Liber Horn*, ed. H.T. RILEY, 4 volumes (London, 1859-1862). The volume is now split between the current *Liber custumarum*, now held once more by the Guildhall in the CLRO; London, British Library, MS Cotton Claudius D ii; and Oxford, Oriel College Library, MS 46. See: CATTO, "Andrew Horn". KER, "Liber custumarum".

²⁷ Oriel MS 46, fol. 210r. This table of contents is printed in: KER, "Liber custumarum", pp. 42-45.

²⁸ On the '*Leges Anglorum*', see: F. LIEBERMANN, *Über die Leges Anglorum Saeculo XIII. Ineunte Londoniis Collectae* (Halle, 1894).

²⁹ On the Pui of London, see: A.F. SUTTON, "The tumbling bear and its patrons: a venue for the London Puy and Mercery", in: *London and Europe in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. J. BOFFEY and P. KING (London, 1995: *Westfield Publications in Medieval Studies* 9), pp. 85-110.

1267 by the Florentine Brunetto Latini while in exile in France. These selections are taken from Latini's discussion of the government of cities, and concern the choice and later self-management of the good governor, or, as the *Liber regum* has it, mayor.

In addition, material relating to the judicial eyre and now integrated into the early fifteenth-century customal the *Liber albus* appears to have been bodily removed from the *Liber regum*, before its fifteenth-century table of contents was compiled.³⁰ It seems likely that Andrew Horn originally included a chronicle in his *Liber regum*, which has been published separately as the *Annales Londoniensis*.³¹ The chronicle has previously been attributed to Horn on the basis of a reference of an almost uniquely personal nature in it, under the year 1305, to

a son of Andrew Horn, who was born, and baptised, and lived for twelve weeks, and lies at Coleman-church next to Alegate.

filius Andreae Horn, natus fuit, et baptizatus, et vixit per xii. septimanas, et iacet apud Coleman-church juxta Alegate.³²

The *Liber regum* appears to have been the product of a single, carefully planned programme of writing and elaborate decoration by professional craftsmen. According to Neil Ker, it "probably always was the finest of the city customals, admirably written and illuminated".³³ The *Liber regum*, then, seems to have been produced as a complete reference work, and as a showpiece item, rather than as an ongoing notebook. Its contents are dignified by the visual impressiveness of the book in which they are contained.

The table of contents reveals that the solid core of the contents of the *Liber regum* were copies of laws and regulations for the city of London. The contemporary legislation which Horn included had obvious relevance to his role as a citizen, craft-member, and later chamberlain of the city of London. Some of the contents dealing with the city's and the country's administration, however, seem to reflect individual interests as well as the professional requirements of

³⁰ See: CATTO, "Andrew Horn", pp. 377-378. *Liber custumarum*, Part 1, p. xiii, n. 3. See also: *Liber Albus: The White Book of the City of London*, trans. H.T. RILEY (London, 1861), p. 55, n. 1, in which Riley records an interlineation of "*Legum Antiqua*." next to a reference to "an ancient book [...] of the said city".

³¹ Printed as: STUBBS, *Annales*; on the authorship of the chronicle by Andrew Horn and its connection with the *Liber regum*, see: pp. xxii-xxviii. CATTO, "Andrew Horn", pp. 374-378.

³² STUBBS, *Annales*, p. 137.

³³ KER, "Liber custumarum", p. 39. DENNISON, "Liber Horn".

the civic official – in particular a fascination with the governmental and legal constitution of London and England, and their history. Contents such as the series of royal charters, here and in the *Liber Horn*, granting rights and increasing autonomy to the city of London over nearly three hundred years, and the lists of civic officials, suggest that Horn was trying to memorialise through formal documentation the legal identity of the city. Jeremy Catto has argued that Horn's assiduous gathering together of both ancient and modern law and legal precept – including the excerpts from the *Tresor* – together with the *Annales*, in the *Liber regum*, indicates both his “historical imagination”, and the importance for him of accumulated law to London's history and its contemporary politics.³⁴

A further example of Horn's sense of the significance of the city's documented legal history for its contemporary good government may be reflected in his unusually detailed description in the *Annales* of an event in the mayoralty of Richer de Refham. Under the entry for 1310 he recounts that de Refham

caused the ancient customs and liberties in the books and rolls of the chamber of the city to be searched, and with the wiser and more powerful men assembled, together with the aldermen, in their presence he had them read and made public

Hic antiquas consuetudines et libertates in rotulis et libris camerae civitati fecit persecutari, et, congregatis sapientioribus, potentioribus, una cum aldermaniis, coram eis fecit legi et pupplicari.³⁵

Horn goes on to comment that in these and other acts, de Refham

thus seemed to preserve and reform the king's city in its former glory.

sic regis civitatem ad pristinam dignitatem et indempnem visus est servare et reformare.³⁶

Horn identifies knowledge of the city's laws, and of its legal identity, with a “glory” which he suggests it has lost in his times. Set in the context of this passage of the chronicle, the role of Andrew Horn described in the *Annales Paulini*, reading to the citizens in English the charter of Edward III to London, seems particularly apt.³⁷

³⁴ CATTO, “Andrew Horn”, especially pp. 381-391.

³⁵ STUBBS, *Annales*, p. 175.

³⁶ STUBBS, *Annales*, pp. 175-176.

³⁷ STUBBS, *Annales*, p. 325.

The *Liber regum* contains other non-documentary entries which seem designed to reflect personal interests, and pride, in the history of the country and the city, such as Henry of Huntingdon's account of the geography and races of England, and William Fitz Stephen's description of London, an example of the literary genre of *encomium urbis*.³⁸ The *encomium urbis* systematically enumerated the attributes of the city concerned, including its physical structure and location; the details of its foundation; the activities of its citizens; its most famous sons and daughters; and any association it may have with saints. In addition, Fitz Stephen's encomium provides a new repertoire of terms for describing the city, through the historical, geographical, and social categories which it encompasses, including a reference to London's foundation by the Trojan Brutus, derived from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Britannicorum*.

Horn's text seems to collect a range of textual and symbolic means of conceptualising the city, and indeed praising it. The city of London is a fragmented but consistent presence in the *Liber regum*, represented through its history, geography, law and customs, a discussion of its form of government which allowed its rule to be considered in more theoretical terms, and the officials and procedures of its government. Horn has included a range of texts which extend from documentation of the city to a more rounded description, praising and honouring London, and which are as influenced by his private enthusiasms as the requirements of his professional involvement in the government of the city.

The Relationship of Horn's Manuscripts with Other 'Customals' of the Fourteenth Century

The *Liber Horn* and the *Liber regum* seem to have been compiled according to individual taste, and in many ways seem closer to the category of 'commonplace book' than that of governmental reference work. They are personalised in their selection of contents, and the margins of Horn's manuscripts are marked with his own commentary on the texts, several notes recording his name, and in the *Liber Horn* the coat of arms adopted by Horn. Yet by bequeathing his books to the Guildhall on his death, Horn altered their status as volumes of private significance, to that of a public resource, belonging to the city's administration and its population as a whole. Indeed, arguably an ambiv-

³⁸ On the *encomium urbis*, see: J.K. HYDE, "Medieval descriptions of cities", in: *Literacy and Its Uses: Studies on Late Medieval Italy*, ed. D. WALEY (Manchester, 1993), pp. 1-32.

alence between private taste and public utility is inherent in the very nature of the customal, based on the evidence of those texts which we have considered already. While these are collections designed according to individual interest, their contents largely derived from the documentation owned and produced by the city's administration, including craft ordinances, lists of civic officials and royal charters to the city. Horn's books indicate an interest in the private possession of collections of copies of documents relevant to the government of the city and held in the civic archive as a communal resource.

The status of Horn's customals as public books was, however, reinforced by the adoption of their format in the production of customals within the institution of the Guildhall of London. In the period immediately following Horn's appointment as chamberlain, two of the customals now held in the Guildhall of London were compiled, and apparently copied from his two private books. The *Liber custumarum* seems to have been almost entirely copied from sections of the *Liber regum*, the *Liber Horn*, and an earlier civic customal, the *Liber ordinationum*, in the 1320s.³⁹ It contains a reference to the *Liber Horn* (on folio 262v) and "non scribe" has been inscribed in the *Liber Horn* next to items which have not been transcribed into the *Liber custumarum*.⁴⁰ The *Liber memorandorum* was also later partially based on the collection of laws in the *Liber Horn*.⁴¹ No names have been added to the margins or endleaves of these manuscripts, and it seems likely that they were produced within the Guildhall by clerks employed by the civic council. It seems that the commencement of Horn's chamberlainship in 1320 (rather than his death at the end of the decade) marked the assimilation of the *Liber Horn* and the *Liber regum* into the civic archive. The *Liber custumarum* and Horn's *Liber regum* later became sources for the fifteenth-century customals of the Guildhall, the *Liber albus* and the *Liber Dunthorne*, and these volumes collectively form one of the main modern-day resources for information on the government, law and history of medieval London. Horn's customals formed a large part of the basis of a documentary tradition within the Guildhall, which has helped to categorise them as official, impersonal texts.

But while subsequent customals now held by the CLRO all appear to have been produced within the city's government, private commissioning of customals also seems to have continued, and, like public compilation, possibly to have intensified. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B.356 constitutes

³⁹ KER, *Medieval Manuscripts*, I, pp. 21-22.

⁴⁰ KER, *Medieval Manuscripts*, I, p. 28.

⁴¹ KER, *Medieval Manuscripts*, I, p. 35.

an almost exact copy of the Guildhall's *Liber memorandum*, with some additional material, and Neil Ker has presented evidence to suggest that MS Rawlinson B.356 may have been the exemplar for this officially produced manuscript.⁴² As such, MS Rawlinson B.356 must have been copied at some stage from Andrew Horn's custumal, the *Liber Horn*. The text is attractively presented, with the main part of it being written in a single, professional hand, and the first page decorated with foliage and the figure of a throned king drawn within the initial. The volume looks like a formal copy, held and annotated by individual owners for their own reference. It bears the names of three post-medieval owners on its endleaves, and there is no record of it ever having been held within the Guildhall. Like Andrew Horn, its owners have marked and annotated their text, with sections marked off with red pencil, and words emphasised by being written over in black ink, although written additions in post-medieval hands in the margins suggest that these alterations, at least, were made at a later period. Unfortunately, the medieval owners of MS Rawlinson B.356 have not attached their signatures to it, although an entry made at the front of the volume on a flyleaf and dated on 20 May 1601 refers to the manuscript as "*liber Iohannis Croke ex dono Lucae Norton*". A further annotation on this endleaf, in the same hand, states that "*cest lievre fuit escrie m^o CCC^o xiiii^{imo} ab incarnatione*". If MS Rawlinson B.356 was produced in 1314, a date which would accord well with its availability for the later production of the *Liber memorandum*, then it must have been copied shortly after the first parts, but not all, of the *Liber Horn* were completed, and while the custumal was still in Andrew Horn's hands, reinforcing the idea that MS Rawlinson B.356 was not produced or held by the Guildhall of London. Most importantly, and whether this occurred before or after it became the property of London's government, the *Liber Horn* seems to have been the exemplar for at least one privately owned custumal.

This has implications for our sense of Horn's idea of the function of his books. While he effectively turned them into public, governmental books, he clearly also saw their utility for individual citizens like himself, and seems to have made the *Liber Horn* available for transcription. However, perhaps more importantly, it confirms that there was an interest in the early part of the fourteenth century amongst London's citizens in holding collections of local and national law. Such an interest is suggested by the prevalence of law texts amongst the books mentioned in the wills of urban citizens.⁴³ For example, the

⁴² KER, *Medieval Manuscripts*, I, p. 35.

⁴³ See also: S.H. CAVANAUGH, *A Study of Books Privately Owned in England: 1300-1450*

will of the London mercer and alderman Walter de Berneye, dated in 1377, records that he bequeathed to William Norton, draper and alderman of London, "all my books of canon and civil law" ("*omnes libros meos iuris canonici et civili*"), although unfortunately this William Norton cannot be connected with the family of Norton who apparently owned MS Rawlinson B.356 in the seventeenth century.⁴⁴

Wills and inventories can, of course, offer only a partial view of book-ownership, since many people named only a few, or possibly none, of the books which they owned. However, more tangible evidence exists in the shape of manuscripts surviving in non-governmental libraries and categorised as 'commonplace books'. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 476, an almost pocket-sized volume measuring only 135 mm. by 92 mm., is one such manuscript. It contains material dating up to around 1312-1313.⁴⁵ The manuscript's contents include a version of the prophecies of Merlin, a chronicle dating from 1064 up until 1274, charters to the city of London from Henry III, John, Richard, and the charter of William the Conqueror, a copy of documents relating to a prosecution brought by the common clerk Hugh de Waltham before the Barons of the Exchequer on behalf of the citizens concerning purprestures, and a "*modus et ordo*" for the citizens for the holding of the judicial eyre at the Tower of London. It is neatly presented, with red and blue ink used to mark sub-sections in the text. Parts of it are decorated, and a full-page miniature of Vortigern and Merlin, accompanied by two dragons, appears on folio 2v at the start of the copy of the prophecies. Some spaces left for illuminated initials have remained blank, suggesting that the programme of decoration was never completed.

London, British Library, MSS Egerton 2885, and Additional 38131 appear to have been compiled in the latter part of the fourteenth century, and contain very similar combinations of contents to Andrew Horn's *Liber Horn* and *Liber regum*. MS Egerton 2885 includes royal charters to the city of London, a list of civic officials from 1189 until 1389, and two separate chronicles. The presence of several statutes relating to the fishmongers of London, mainly dated during the reign of Edward II, has led to its entitlement on its modern binding as "Col-

(unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1980), which contains examples of urban owners of legal books on pp. 148-149, pp. 231-232, pp. 362-363 and elsewhere.

⁴⁴ SHARPE, *Calendar of Wills*, II, p. 205.

⁴⁵ For a full description of the manuscript, see: JAMES, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, II, pp. 414-417. Item three in James' catalogue of the manuscript's contents, concerning a prosecution made before the Barons of the Exchequer on behalf of the citizens, contains a letter from Edward II dated in the sixth year of his reign.

lections Relating To A London Fishmonger". MS Additional 38131 features the description of London by William Fitz Stephen found in the *Liber regum*, together with the collection of royal statutes contained in both Horn's books, the series of precedents for the holding of the judicial eyre found in the *Liber custumarum*, together with an account of some of the events of the Iter of 1321, ordinances relating to the fishmongers, once again, and royal charters to London dating back to Edward the Confessor, and including the Anglo-Saxon version of William the Conqueror's charter to the city.⁴⁶

The combination of administrative material and non-documentary contents in these three manuscripts suggest that they were privately compiled and owned during the fourteenth century. Certainly there does not appear to be any record of them amongst the possessions of the Guildhall archive at this time. Only MS Additional 38131 bears the name of a medieval owner, who was almost certainly its compiler: it contains at least two references to a Thomas Carleton, the embroiderer and alderman whose will is dated in 1382.⁴⁷ However, although we may not know their owners' names, the predominance of texts concerning London in these manuscripts would seem to confirm that they must have been held, like BL Additional 38131 and the *Liber regum*, by readers considerably involved and interested in the government of London, and almost certainly by London citizens – readers for whom a comprehensive collection of the laws of London might indeed be valuable.⁴⁸

While these may not be direct copies of Horn's manuscripts, they display the pervasiveness of the model which he had assembled in the *Liber Horn* and the *Liber regum*. We can see that this paradigm constituted a basic combination

⁴⁶ Helen Cam describes the contents of MS Additional 38131 dealing with the judicial eyre in: H. CAM, *Year Books of Edward II. The Eyre of London: 14 Edward II A.D. 1321*, 2 volumes (London, 1968-1969: *Selden Society* 85-86), I, pp. cl-clii. This manuscript has also been discussed in: H. KLEINEKE, *William Fitz Stephen's Description of London* (unpublished MA dissertation, University of London, 1994).

⁴⁷ MS Additional 38131, fols. 79v-80v, contain copies of an indenture made between Thomas de Carleton "*civis London albanus persona ecclesie de hadham*" (on fol. 79v) and a John Payn. And on fol. 1v a series of sums of money are noted as "*Extentus redditus Thome de Carleton*" for properties including shops, and tenements in Wodestrete, and a "*domus apud le leon on the hop*". The will of Thomas Carleton, "*brouderer*", dated in 1382, refers to his properties, including shops, in Wodestrete, and a tenement called "*le lyon on the hope*": SHARPE, *Calendar of Wills*, II, pp. 272-273, p. 272.

⁴⁸ It seems likely that other examples of this kind of compilation, with similar contents, from London and other towns, survive in other archives and libraries. One example might be the fourteenth-century London, British Library, MS Additional 37791, which contains civic statutes from London, Norwich, and King's Lynn, perhaps suggesting that its owner was involved in business in all three towns.

of London legislation, often contained within the same quires, and a fairly consistent compilation of the statutes of the realm, usually accompanied by a table of articles. These copies of national statutes frequently constituted the most finely decorated section of the manuscript.⁴⁹ These are set alongside recurring items, including the Anglo-Saxon charter of William the Conqueror, chronicles, material relating to the holding of the judicial eyre at the Tower of London, and the statutes of the fishmongers. In terms of their content, the privately owned legal collections discussed here display a distinct resemblance to both Horn's books, and the customals subsequently produced within London's civic government. While these manuscripts, in governmental and private ownership, can be, and have been, differentiated into the discrete genres of 'customal' and 'legal commonplace book', the fact that Andrew Horn's compilations represent the common source for at least some of both kinds of text emphasises the continuity between them. In the years after Andrew Horn bequeathed his books to the Guildhall the customal seems to have flourished as a genre which functioned in both the public sphere and within the families of London citizens.

Literacy and Citizenship

What conclusions can be drawn from this evidence? We can see, first, that by the end of the fourteenth century at the latest, and perhaps as a direct legacy of Andrew Horn's compilations, the civic customal had achieved a roughly standardised form in its dual format as a governmental and a private collection. The ambivalence between public, governmental utility and private selection in the typical contents of the customal must have been intensified by the establishment and success of closely related collections in both public and private hands in the fourteenth century, so that this ambivalence became a definitive aspect of these compilations as they converged into a recognisable genre during this period. Crucially, contents concerning the city of London of both an administrative and a non-documentary nature seem to be consistently included in these compilations, bringing focus to collections which include items which are otherwise often dissimilar. Moreover, although we have evidence for the ownership of only some of these private compilations, what we do know sug-

⁴⁹ Typically in the manuscripts examined, these royal statutes include the Magna Carta, the Charter of the Forest, the Statutes of Merton, Marlborough, Gloucester, Lincoln, York, and Winchester, the Statute of Merchants, and the first and second Statutes of Westminster.

gests that they were indeed commissioned and read by citizens who were involved in London's government, probably as aldermen if not at a higher level.

This enables us to make more specific comment on the extent and use of literate skills amongst London's citizen body. It seems that these men possessed a level of literacy which encompassed the administrative and business Latin and Anglo-Norman in which the legal documents were inscribed – a manifestation of the 'pragmatic literacy', or literate skills developed through and sufficient for reading and writing for business purposes.⁵⁰ As was discussed in the introduction, scholars such as Sylvia Thrupp and Harvey Graff have argued that the evidence from wills and other documentation for merchants' attitudes to books "does not speak well for the London merchants' intellectual curiosity or initiative".⁵¹ The evidence of the manuscripts examined here, however, suggests that the civic customal was a type of book on which certain London citizens were willing to expend the effort and expense of compilation. Moreover, the range of types of writing contained in the customal, encompassing law, chronicle, and sometimes laudatory description of the city of London, signals that the literary interests of this social group were extending beyond the strict bounds of 'pragmatic literacy'. Carol Meale has argued that the London 'common-place books' of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries provide evidence of the increasing exercising of 'non-pragmatic' literacy among London citizens, and that such books by the diversity of their contents, "demonstrate more clearly than other types of compilation the compatibility of the various uses of literacy".⁵² The civic customals of Andrew Horn, and those later, privately held versions of them imply that London citizens were utilising their literacy from as early as the first quarter of the fourteenth century to indulge an interest in the law and history of their city and country.⁵³

But while the utility of the customal within the civic archive is obvious, what was its value to the aldermen who seem to have compiled these manuscripts? We have already noted the usefulness of the marginal annotations in the *Liber Horn*, identifying the locations of the documents contained in the

⁵⁰ On 'pragmatic literacy', see: PARKES, "The literacy of the laity".

⁵¹ THRUPP, *The Merchant Class*, p. 161.

⁵² C.M. MEALE, *The Social and Literary Contexts of a Late Medieval Manuscript: A Study of British Library Manuscript Harley 2252 and Its Owner John Colyns* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of York, 1984), p. 212.

⁵³ Anne Sutton, in her article on the London Pui at the turn of the fourteenth century, presents further persuasive evidence that affluent citizens, including those who served as civic officials and clerks, were interested in using their literate skills in composition and appreciation of literary, as opposed to documentary texts. SUTTON, "The tumbling bear".

volume within London's ever-expanding civic archive, and it is interesting that these have been carried over into the privately held MS Rawlinson B.356, but reduced in the *Liber memorandum*, which was copied from it and held in the Guildhall. MS Rawlinson B.356 and the *Liber Horn* thus provided a referencing system to the Guildhall archive, and manageable collections of some of the urban and national laws recorded there. For the aldermen who owned these collections, such a guide to the statutes on which the administration they served was based must have been invaluable. Like the *Liber regum*, they constituted a kind of archive in themselves, and a type of professional handbook for governmental officials.

The prestige attached to ownership of these manuscripts must also be taken into consideration. Indeed, the manuscripts discussed here which do seem to have been compiled privately, including the *Liber Horn*, the *Liber regum*, MS Rawlinson B.356 and MS Egerton 2885, and at least parts of MS Additional 38131, are generally more impressively decorated and more carefully organised than some of those probably produced in the Guildhall, including the *Liber memorandum*, presumably because private money for textual illumination was more plentiful than public finance. Within private households or families, however, the visual impressiveness of a book might have been more important than in the working climate of the Guildhall. It seems likely that possession of such books might have been sought as a mark of status within the city.

The symbolic significance of the civic custumal, however, must also have lain in the very elasticity of its possible categorisation as private compilation or governmental record. The custumal may well have acquired status through its possession within the families of London citizens of, presumably, relative affluence, and authority in their households, their wards, and their crafts. But its association, in content and ownership, with the laws and administration by which the city was run must have increased the potency of the custumal as an accoutrement of governmental power. The kinds of writing most frequently found in these manuscripts, including legislation, chronicle, and lists of civic officials, constituted a useful guide-book for those participating in London's government, but also included genres already popular with London citizens, and which bound them into a sense of corporate and historical community.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Mary-Rose McLaren has argued that the chronicles of London "record a history perceived as the common property of the citizens of London, belonging to them by virtue of their being citizens, literate and English, and commonly recorded by them": M. McLAREN, "The textual transmission of the London chronicles", *English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700* 3 (1992), pp. 38-72, p. 62.

Texts such as William Fitz Stephen's laudatory description of London, the charter granted to London by William I, and catalogues of London's mayors, which are generically disparate, collectively provide a textual focus on the legal and historical identity of the city of London which may well not always have been obvious to their aldermanic readers in their actual administration of London's government. Strictly speaking, they cannot be easily categorised as examples of either 'pragmatic literacy' or 'leisure reading', but open up a new area of textual consumption in relation to a sense of urban citizenship. In fact, the confluence of the 'public' and the 'private' in the civic customal may well have lain at the root of its appeal as a private possession. The very duality of the manuscripts discussed here must only parallel the concurrent roles of their owners as heads of households, members of working communities and ultimately officials of civic government. Like Andrew Horn, the chamberlain of London, these later aldermanic owners of customals may have seen in their possession of books which recorded the members and administrative decisions of their city's ruling council a reflection of their own relationship with the city and its government – their sense of citizenship was inscribed in the volumes which they owned, making this writing truly 'civic'.⁵⁵

Conclusion

In bequeathing the *Liber Horn* and the *Liber regum* to the Guildhall of London in 1329, Andrew Horn highlighted and intensified an ambivalence in the nature of the civic customal: although its earlier surviving manifestations in London had been as privately produced and owned books, its contents connected it with the sphere of public government. In the years following the completion of his two customals, moreover, their combination of statutes and customs, history and description, became the basis for a number of both private and public volumes, thriving in the institution of urban government as well as in the possession of citizens, and seemingly frequently aldermen, of the city of London. These developments, and in particular the continuing popularity of privately held customals, confirm that throughout the fourteenth century Lon-

⁵⁵ Volumes containing both the ordinances and an account of the membership and history of craft bodies also survive from medieval London. See for example: London Guildhall Library, MS 11570, compiled between 1345 and 1463 by the Grocers' Company. Such volumes might also have provided a further example of manuscripts compiled for administrative purposes which embodied a kind of social prestige.

don citizens were interested in exercising their literate skills on a genre which with its collections of custom, history, and administrative record must have been relevant not only to their business lives, but also to their roles as citizens and potential officials of urban government. The 'public' aspect of the custumal must have added to its status and prestige for its owners, but it also reflected their complex sense of their citizenship, and their pride in their city. The pervading influence of Andrew Horn and his bequest of 1329, however, highlight a further significance of his transferral of his books from private to public ownership. In another of Horn's compilations, *Corpus MS 70*, a hand thought to be his own has written:

I intend to compile from that book and others [...] a great book that I consider useful to represent our times in the present to people coming after us.

*intendo ex libro isto et aliis [...] magnum codicem componere quia utile duxi posteris presentia temporum nostrorum exprimere.*⁵⁶

By placing them in the safe-keeping of the Guildhall archive, Horn increased the chances of the survival of his books, but also ensured that their version of the significant laws and customs, history, and description of London became the 'public' and authoritative one for the future.

⁵⁶ *Corpus MS 70*, fol. 96r. This hand is very close to that in which the notes of ownership are made on *Corpus MSS 70* and 258.

Parochial Libraries in Pre-Reformation England

STACEY GEE

The most well-known type of parochial library in late medieval England is the stock of service books kept in parish churches for the use of the clergy. A wide range of liturgical books was needed in the churches in order to carry out the services, as well as the breviaries or missals which the rectors, vicars or curates may have privately owned. Attempts were made by the ecclesiastical authorities to try to ensure that the minimum number of liturgical texts were available to the clergy, and that they were in good condition.¹ This essay, however, will not focus on manuals of the liturgy, but instead the legal and theological texts, grammar books, clerical manuals and other books of religious instruction and edification that were available in a number of pre-Reformation English parish churches. For the purpose of this study, these (other than service-)books will be given the general term of 'reference' books.

The availability of reference books in parish churches has generally been assumed to be either non-existent or ubiquitous. According to a report of the Central Council for the Care of Churches, for example, "probably most churches possessed some books other than service-books in the fifteenth century", yet only two examples are given.² Raymond Irwin has also asserted that widespread use was made of reference volumes in parish churches, but the force of his argument is weakened by a failure to separate parochial from colle-

¹ See, for example: C. WORDSWORTH and H. LITTLEHALES, *The Old Service Books of the English Church* (London, 1904), pp. 26-30. *Archdeaconry of Norwich: Inventory of Church Goods temp. Edward III*, ed. D.A. WATKIN, 2 volumes (Norwich, 1947: *Norfolk Record Society* 19), II, p. xxvi.

² Central Council for the Care of Churches, *Parochial Libraries of the Church of England* (London, 1959), p. 14. This is currently being updated by Michael Perkin, see: *Library History* 14 (1998), pp. 12-13.

giate libraries.³ It is far more common, however, for the libraries of parish churches to be overlooked in studies of medieval libraries, which have nearly always focused on the much larger cathedral and monastic collections.⁴ Furthermore, these parochial libraries have been overlooked in discussions of the intellectual interests and reading habits of the clergy.⁵ To a large extent, this is a result of the nature of the sources themselves. These libraries were very rarely formally established, but instead grew slowly from the gift and bequest of books. Consequently, we are reliant upon inscriptions in extant manuscripts or printed books, the occasional church inventory or scattered references to parish churches in wills.

The evidence for parochial libraries in pre-Reformation England presented here has been obtained from publications of wills, supplemented by an extensive reading of the unpublished wills of the York diocese.⁶ A comprehensive search of churchwardens' accounts available in print has been made in the hope of finding lists of church possessions, together with all known published inventories of church goods. Records of church visitations have been sampled, but as mention of books was rarely found, these have not been read extensively. For the evidence of extant manuscripts and printed books which belonged to parochial libraries, I am dependent on the work of N.R. Ker and Andrew G. Watson.⁷ It is impossible to know exactly how common was the possession of reference books by English parish churches before the mid-sixteenth century, as there is no way of discerning what proportion of the evidence has survived. So far, 192 parish churches are known to have owned at least one reference book between 1350 and 1536. The latter date was chosen as the terminus of this study as in that year the Henrician government started to

³ R. IRWIN, *The Heritage of the English Library* (London, 1964), pp. 249-261. See also: J.A.H. MORAN, *The Growth of English Schooling 1340-1548: Learning, Literacy and Laicization in Pre-Reformation York Diocese* (Princeton, 1985), p. 210.

⁴ An example is: F. WORMALD and C.E. WRIGHT, *The English Library before 1700* (London, 1958).

⁵ P. HEATH, *The English Parish Church on the Eve of the Reformation* (London, 1969). N.P. TANNER, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich 1370-1532* (Toronto, 1984). E.L. MEEK, "Printing and the English parish clergy in the later middle ages", *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 11 (1997), pp. 112-126.

⁶ The study of wills from York diocese was undertaken for the purpose of my D. Phil. thesis: "At the Sygne of the Cardynalles Hat": *The Book Trade and the Market for Books in Yorkshire c. 1450-1550* (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of York, 1999).

⁷ N.R. KER, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books* (second edition; London, 1964). A.G. WATSON, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: Supplement to the Second Edition* (London, 1987).

legislate concerning the content of parochial libraries by ordering that parish churches should acquire and keep Bibles in Latin and English.⁸

In the first part of this paper I will investigate by whom the books were used. This will involve an investigation of the location of the books within the churches, of the status of the donors who presented the volumes and of the different types of reference books held in the libraries. This will allow us to determine whether the libraries were in any sense 'public'. I will then assess the implications of the use of parochial libraries, and I will re-evaluate the traditional views of the reading interests of the clergy. The bequest of reference volumes to parish churches reveals a concern by high-ranking ecclesiastics, as well as parish priests, that spiritual edification and instruction in clerical duties should be near at hand. This interest in clerical learning anticipates some of the changes attributed to the Reformation.

The objection might be raised that we cannot be sure if a book which had been bequeathed was indeed maintained and read in the church or if it was simply sold and the proceeds donated towards the church fabric. Unless a later inventory of the church mentions the book, we cannot know if the volume did remain in the church, any more than the testator could be sure that his or her wishes would be carried out. Indeed, the wording of some of the bequests reveals that the testators were often aware that the book(s) might be sold, and they therefore tried to anticipate and prevent this. It was frequently stated that the book should remain in the church "forever". Thomas de Lexham, canon of Hereford, for example, gave his *Pupilla oculi* to Feltwell St Mary church in Norfolk in 1383 with the condition that it should remain forever in the church for the common use of all the ministers of that church and of other churches.⁹ Pawning of the donated books was also easily prevented by the stipulation that the volumes should be chained. This was a very common request, not only to prevent the book being sold, but also from being stolen. Other testators stated outright that the volume should not be disposed of. Richard Tyttesbury, canon of Exeter, for example, was determined to control the fate of his clerical manual after his death in 1410:

⁸ C. HAIGH, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993), p. 130.

⁹ S.H. CAVANAUGH, *A Study of Books Privately Owned in England 1300-1450* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1980), pp. 512-514.

To Richard Graynevyll, for life, the use of the book called *Pupilla oculi*, in the said Richard's own handwriting, to go, after his death to Ermington Church for ever, to be used by the ministers of the church for their learning, and never to be sold by the parishioners.¹⁰

When does a collection of books become a library? Most parish churches would probably only have had one or two reference books, but for a few there are indications that the book collection was far more substantial. In 1404, the foundations of a library were laid at St Michael's church in Coventry by a chaplain, William Wilmyncote.¹¹ As well as setting up a 'common-profit scheme', Wilmyncote bequeathed a *Summa summarum* of William of Pagula, a *Vitas patrum* of Jerome, the *Summa de ecclesiasticis officiis* and a *Rationale divinorum* to the church. The collection was enlarged in 1425 by the addition of two more volumes bequeathed by John Wakering, Bishop of Norwich, to remain in the library forever.¹² A substantial collection of books had also been kept at the church of Meare in Somerset since the early fifteenth century. It was never specifically called a library, probably because most of the books were kept in the custody of the priests, and were therefore not available to hand in the body of the church. The inventory of 1405 listed eleven volumes including scriptural works and books of canon law.¹³

The stock of books in Boston church, Lincolnshire was considered large enough to be called a library. In 1457, John Edlyngton, rector of Kirkby Ravensworth, gave a Bible to "*librariae ecclesiae parochialis de Boston*" ("the library of the parish church of Boston"). Boston church also received from Edlyngton a book of history, a devotional text and the rest of his books which had not already been sold or bequeathed.¹⁴ Another example is St Nicholas's church in Bristol. John Cogan, a mercer and mayor of Bristol, founded in 1468 "*unam librariam*" with books, chests and chains.¹⁵ Later, in 1540-1541, the churchwardens of St Nicholas church "*paid for a new key for the locke of*

¹⁰ *The Register of Edmund Stafford (A.D. 1395-1419)*, ed. F.C. HINGESTON-RANDOLPH (London, 1886), pp. 394-395.

¹¹ York, Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, Exchequer Probate Register (henceforth referred to as BIHR, Prob. Reg.), III, fols. 226v-227r.

¹² *The Register of Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury 1414-1443*, ed. E.F. JACOB (London, 1937: *Canterbury and York Society* 42), pp. 311-314.

¹³ *The Register of John Chandler, Dean of Salisbury 1404-17*, ed. T.C.B. TIMMINS (Devizes, 1984: *Wiltshire Record Society* 39), pp. 51-52.

¹⁴ York Minster Library, L2/4, fol. 287r-v.

¹⁵ E.G.C.F. ATCHLEY, "On the medieval parish records of the church of St Nicholas, Bristol", *Transactions of the St Paul's Ecclesiological Society* 6 (1910), pp. 35-67.

the lybrary at owr lady awtyre, ijd".¹⁶ The collection of books owned by All Saints church, Tilney in Norfolk, was also referred to as a library. In 1486, the churchwardens paid 6d "*pro catenis ad librariam*" ("for chains for the library").¹⁷ Although no specific mention is made in the accounts of the purchase of reference books before the Reformation, an inventory of 1368 included amongst the church's possessions the *Canon penitentialis*, a grammar text of Hugutio of Pisa and a *Doctrinale*.¹⁸ Other library collections of at least four reference books were kept by Walsoken in Norfolk (1368); St Mary's, Scarborough (1434); St Margaret's, New Fish Street, London (1472); St Mary's, Bridport in Dorset (1476); Wath church in Yorkshire (1508) and All Saints, Walsall in Staffordshire (1515/6).¹⁹

Brief mention has been made of the 'common-profit' scheme established by Wilmyncote in St Michael's Church, Coventry.²⁰ The chaplain's will stipulated that his Bible and six other books should be given to John Morele, chaplain, and then on his death, to Richard de Swayneby, a poor clerk. On Swayneby's death, and for as long as the books lasted, they were to be passed on to other poor clerks and chaplains. A similar scheme was set up by the anchorite and friar John Lacy in the church of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Lacy gave a Book of Hours containing an English commentary on the Decalogue, English tracts on confession and collected sentences of the Church Fathers (now Oxford, St John's College, MS 94) to a chaplain, Roger Stonysdale in 1434.²¹ After Stonysdale's death, it was to pass to the use of another chaplain of the church in return for prayers for Lacy's soul. These and other 'common-profit' books were tied to the church, as they could only be passed between clergy serving in that particular church. However, they were held in the private possession of

¹⁶ ATCHLEY, "Parish records of St Nicholas", p. 60.

¹⁷ *The Transcript of the Churchwardens' Accounts of the Parish of Tilney All Saints, Norfolk, 1443-1589*, ed. A.D. STALLARD (London, 1922), p. 64.

¹⁸ *Archdeaconry of Norwich*, II, p. 126.

¹⁹ *Archdeaconry of Norwich*, II, p. 129. W.H. ST JOHN HOPE, "Inventories of the parish church of St. Mary, Scarborough", *Archaeologia* 51, part 1 (1888), pp. 61-72. London, Guildhall Library, MS 1174. N. ORME, *Education in the West of England 1066-1548* (Exeter, 1976), p. 96. York Minster Library, L2/5a, fols. 88r-89r. G.P. MANDER, "Churchwardens' accounts, All Saints' church, Walsall, 1462-1531", *William Salt Archaeological Society* 52 (1928), pp. 173-267.

²⁰ BIHR, Prob. Reg., III, fols. 226v-227r. See also: W. SCASE, "Reginald Pecock, John Carpenter and John Colop's 'common-profit' books: aspects of book ownership and circulation in fifteenth-century London", *Medium Aevum* 61 (1992), pp. 261-274.

²¹ H.O. COXE, *Catalogus codicum MSS qui in collegiis aulisque oxoniensis*, 2 volumes (Oxford, 1852), II, p. 27.

each successive recipient, and were not available for general use. Therefore, such 'common-profit schemes' are not included in this study as evidence of parochial libraries.

If the criteria for the existence of a parochial library include the availability of the books to a large number of people, then it is essential to try to establish who were allowed to use them. In order to be accepted as a 'public' library in the modern sense, we would expect not only all the clergy of the church, but also the parishioners to have access to the books. Before the Reformation, the religious and devotional instruction that the laity received in the parish church was either through sermons or by means of the prayer books, in particular, Books of Hours, which the more well-off and literate parishioners brought into church to use during the services. A few examples of parishes where the parishioners were allowed to use the books of the church have survived, but these are exceptional. In his bequest of a breviary to the church of Ide in Devon in 1406, John de Lydeford, archdeacon of Totnes gave the instruction that it should

remain there for ever, for the use of the parish presbyters and the parishioners; for the officiating presbyter and the parishioners [*sic*], on Sundays and other feasts.²²

The clergy and laity of St Olave, Southwark also shared the use of an antiphoner, which had been bequeathed by Sir William Burcestre in 1407.²³ It is possible that these examples of communal use may have extended to other books as well. Indeed, the will of William Gefferey, who died in 1503, gave four reference volumes to St Mary's church in Swansea and instructed that they should be chained in the body of the church so that literate parishioners might have access to them.²⁴

Gefferey's bequest is impressive and may be interpreted as the foundation of a public library in St Mary's, Swansea. Yet we can never be sure if the instructions left in a will were carried out. It would have been very easy for the priest or rector to have prevented the parishioners access to the volumes if he so desired. In 1546, for example, Richard Tracy complained that, despite the injunctions that a Bible should be set up in every parish church, the parishioners were still no better off because the priests and vicars

²² *Register of Edmund Stafford*, pp. 389-390.

²³ CAVANAUGH, *Study of Books*, p. 150.

²⁴ J.R. LANDER, *Government and Community: England 1450-1509* (London, 1980), p. 162.

wuld pluck it other into the quyre, or ellse into som pue, where pore men durst not presume to come.²⁵

Usually the testator stated clearly in his will that he expected the volume to be used only by the priest and the chaplains. Walter Robert, rector of Tiverton, for instance, was emphatic that his bequest of a breviary in 1415 to Northill church in Devon should only be used by the rector and “the parishioners to have no right to the same”.²⁶ Another example is Robert Same, chaplain of Bury, who gave his copy of *Fasciculus morum* to the church of Wetheringsett in Suffolk in 1519 “to lye in the chancell, for priests to occupye ther tyme when it shall please them”.²⁷ Similar instructions were given in the will of John Elton, parson of Stanton (dated 1535):

Also I woll that my small portas of velum be leyde in the qwere of the said collingham church [in Yorkshire] redy for any strange priest to say his service upon.²⁸

As well as stipulating by whom the reference books were to be used, the testators were often concerned to state *where* the volumes should be kept. As we have seen from the complaint of Robert Tracy, the location of the books within the church had a large bearing on their availability. Tracy complained that many Bibles had been moved out of the body of the church and into the choir or a pew, which the less well-off laity were not allowed to enter. In theory, at least, the chancel was the most sacred part of the church where the Holy Sacrament was performed and was therefore the province of the clergy.²⁹ The restriction of the laity to the nave or body of the church is reflected in the division of responsibility for the upkeep of the church between the parishioners and the clergy. In the late fourteenth century, Bishop Brantingham of Exeter instructed his diocese that

²⁵ *A Supplicacyon for the Beggars*, ed. F.J. FURNIVALL (London, 1905: *EETS ES* 13), p. 67.

²⁶ *Register of Edmund Stafford*, pp. 406-407.

²⁷ *Wills and Inventories from the Registers of the Commissary of Bury St Edmunds and the Archdeacon of Sudbury*, ed. S. TYMMS (London, 1850: *Camden Society* 49), p. 253n. The *Fasciculus morum* was a standard reference text for preaching, dealing with the vices and virtues and the catechism. See: S. WENZEL, *Verses in Sermons: Fasciculus Morum and its Middle English Poems* (Cambridge MA, 1978), pp. 9-10.

²⁸ BIHR, Archbishop's Register, XXVIII, fols. 171v-173v.

²⁹ C.P. GRAVES, “Social space in the English medieval parish church”, *Economy and Society* 18 (1989), pp. 297-322.

the work of constructing and repairing the chancels of all mother churches belongs to the rector of the parishes, but that of the nave pertains to the parishioners without regard to any contrary custom.³⁰

Exceptions were made for the more wealthy laity, however, who were often accorded the privilege of sitting in the choir with the clergy.³¹ The statutes of Walter de Cantilupe, issued in 1240 for the diocese of Worcester, for example, stipulated that only the patrons of the church and other important lay people should be allowed to stand in the chancel during the church services.³² Similar provisions had been made for the diocese of Lincoln in around 1239 by Bishop Robert Grosseteste.³³ John Lamley, a butcher of York, was accustomed to sit in the choir of his parish church.³⁴ Likewise, a seat in the choir of St Sampson's church in York was held by a wool merchant, Thomas Bardolfe.³⁵

The choir was also frequented by children who were being taught in the parish song school, if there was one. The church of All Saints in Bristol had children's seats set in the choir in 1407.³⁶ In 1530, Margaret Dymong of Wakering left one penny to "*every scolar belongyng to the qwere*" of her parish church.³⁷ For elementary reading and religious instruction, the pupils would have used the church service books, from which they learnt the Hail Mary and the Lord's Prayer. The 1473 inventory of St Mary's church in Sandwich, for example, included two breviaries and three old legend books from which the children were taught.³⁸ From there, they would have progressed to reading and memorizing parts of and then perhaps the whole psalter.³⁹ The vicar of Hornby in the North Riding left a breviary to the church in 1439 under the condition that the clergy and boys who were using the books to teach or learn from should not damage or dirty them.⁴⁰ The vicar's fear of runny noses, dirty fin-

³⁰ G.H. Cook, *The English Medieval Church* (London, 1961), p. 23.

³¹ M. ASTON, "Segregation in the church", in: *Women in the Church*, ed. W.J. SHEILS and D. WOOD (Oxford, 1990: *Studies in Church History* 27), pp. 244-247.

³² C.R. CHENEY, *English Synodalia of the Thirteenth Century* (second edition; Oxford, 1968), p. 122. *Councils and Synods with other Documents relating to the English Church II AD 1205-1313*, ed. F.M. POWICKE and C.R. CHENEY (Oxford, 1964), p. 297.

³³ *Councils and Synods*, p. 275.

³⁴ BIHR, Prob. Reg., II, fol. 37r.

³⁵ BIHR, Prob. Reg., II, fol. 604v.

³⁶ E.G.C.F. ATCHLEY, "On the parish records of the church of All Saints, Bristol", *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* 27 (1904), pp. 221-274.

³⁷ BIHR, Prob. Reg., X, fol. 47r.

³⁸ W. BOYS, *Collections for a History of Sandwich* (Canterbury, 1892), p. 376.

³⁹ MORAN, *Growth of English Schooling*, p. 46.

⁴⁰ York Minster Library, L2/4, fol. 251r.

gers and an infantile lack of respect for the books was shared by William Bridgeman, late clerk of All Saints, Bristol. In 1524 a variety of music books, including masses, carols and anthems, were bequeathed to the church by Bridgeman with the instruction that they should not be made available to the children.⁴¹

Only one example has been found of a reference book being kept in the nave. In 1533, the church of St Mary Major, Exeter, had a copy of the *Pupilla oculi* of John de Burgh chained in the body of the church.⁴² Most of the bequests of reference books stipulate that the volumes should be kept in the chancel or choir, restricted to the use of those who were allowed to enter the holiest area of the church. In 1486-1487, for instance, Thomas Tubbac, merchant of York, bequeathed to the church of St John the Evangelist, also in York, an *Historia scholastica* to be bound with an iron chain in the choir of the church.⁴³ Copies of the *Pupilla oculi* were also chained in the choirs of Sibton church in Suffolk and Collingham church in Yorkshire in 1507 and 1535 respectively.⁴⁴

Some testators specified in their wills that the book should be for the primary use of the rector or vicar, and should therefore lie near his seat. An instruction that the books should be chained in the stall before the rector in the choir was tied to the bequest of three books to All Saints Church in North Street, York by James Bagule in 1440.⁴⁵ The copy of the *Pupilla Oculi* bequeathed to Uggeshall church in Suffolk in 1504 was likewise to be placed "*in the overende of the parson stall*".⁴⁶ Other books were placed in chapels or were attached to chantries. The chapel of St John in St Ewen's church, Bristol, had chained inside two books of sermons and a small breviary in 1491-1492.⁴⁷

In his will of 1379, Thomas de Farnylawe, chancellor of York, bequeathed to the church of St Nicholas in Newcastle a Bible and concordance, which he instructed should be chained "*in porticu boriali*". The "*porticus*" may have

⁴¹ E.G.C.F. ATCHLEY, "The Halleway chantry at the parish church of All Saints, Bristol, and the Halleway family", *Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* 24 (1901), pp. 74-125.

⁴² R. WHITING, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 22.

⁴³ BIHR, Prob. Reg., v, fol. 299v.

⁴⁴ J. MIDDLETON-STEWART, "The provision of books for church use in the deanery of Dunwich, 1370-1547", *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* 38, part 2 (1994), pp. 149-163. BIHR, Archbishop's Register, xxviii, fols. 171v-173r (Elton).

⁴⁵ BIHR, Prob. Reg., II, fol. 17r.

⁴⁶ MIDDLETON-STEWART, "Provision of books", p. 157.

⁴⁷ J. MACLEAN, "Notes on the accounts of the procurators, or churchwardens, of the parish of St Ewen's, Bristol", *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* 15 (1890-1891), pp. 139-182 and pp. 254-296.

referred to either a chapel or the porch of the church. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it was common for porches to be built onto churches to enclose the entrance to the nave.⁴⁸ Some church rituals, such as marriage rites, or parts of the service of baptism, were occasionally performed in the porch, and it was not unknown for an altar to be set up there.⁴⁹ From the fourteenth century onwards, porches began to be built with upper chambers where the registers and documents of the church could be stored.⁵⁰ This could have been a suitable place to keep the reference books of the church as well.

In many of the examples of bequests given so far in this study, the testator has stated that he expected the books to be chained.⁵¹ We may infer that the reference books were not therefore intended to be lent out or borrowed. The chains were no doubt necessary in order to prevent theft. A common occurrence in late medieval England when many of the books, particularly service books and Bibles, were elaborately decorated with lavish illumination. The parishioners of All Saints, Bristol, managed to recover a stolen psalter, only to have it disappear from their library once again.⁵²

The variety of places within the parish church where the reference books could be stored indicate that the laity may occasionally have been granted access to the books. The majority, nonetheless, were chained in the choir where they would only have been available to the clergy and the more well-off laity. A further indication of the parishioners' interest in these volumes can be gained by considering by whom the books were donated. Out of the 113 testators who are known to have bequeathed a reference book to a parish church, only seven were laymen and none were women. Two of the lay donors, John Crove of Wenlock and Thomas de Alta Ripa of York, were married clerks. They both gave a clerical manual to their parish churches in 1437.⁵³ "*Omnes libros meos gramaticales*" ("all my grammar books") were bequeathed by a

⁴⁸ COOK, *English Medieval Church*, p. 188.

⁴⁹ COOK, *English Medieval Church*, p. 189.

⁵⁰ COOK, *English Medieval Church*, p. 190.

⁵¹ Further examples of chaining can be found in: BIHR, Prob. Reg., II, fol. 353r-v (Folkton); IV, fols. 41v-42r (Holme). BIHR, Archbishop's Register, XXVI, fol. 141v (Shirburn). H.R. PLOMER, "Books mentioned in wills", *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 7 (1902-1904), pp. 99-121. C. KERRY, *A History of the Municipal Church of St Laurence, Reading* (Reading, 1883), pp. 101-103.

⁵² ATCHLEY, "Parish records of All Saints", p. 236.

⁵³ V. GILLESPIE, "The evolution of the *Speculum christianum*", in: *Latin and Vernacular: Studies in Late-Medieval Texts and Manuscripts*, ed. A.J. MINNIS (Cambridge, 1989), p. 44n. BIHR, Prob. Reg., III, fols. 493v-494r.

layman to the chapel of St Augustine, Hedon in Holderness in 1466.⁵⁴ The parish church of Wollaton in Nottinghamshire also received a devotional book called *Crede mihi* from a layman, Richard Willugby, in 1471.⁵⁵ Sir Brian Roucliff, a lawyer of Colthorp in Yorkshire, likewise bequeathed a pastoral manual to Colthorp church in 1495.⁵⁶ Copies of the *Golden Legend*, the compendium of saints' lives, were presented to the churches of Selworthy in Somerset and St Margaret's, Westminster by two other laymen in 1491 and 1502 respectively.⁵⁷ All the gifts by laymen date from the fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries, and probably reflect a growth in lay literacy during this period. The study of lay involvement in schooling in the York diocese by Jo Ann Hoeppner Moran argues that skills in reading and writing were becoming more common during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. She includes amongst her evidence the spread of Lollardy, the use of posted bills and the distribution of written notices.⁵⁸ The wording of some of the bequests leaves it unclear whether the lay testator was donating a volume from his own library or just the money required to buy a copy of the text. Nevertheless, the bequest of specific reference texts to the churches does suggest that these lay testators were familiar with the volume's contents and aware of what may be useful in a parochial library. The small proportion of lay gifts of reference books, however, indicate that an interest in such volumes by the parishioners was rare.

It is now necessary to have a detailed look at the types of text that were most commonly found in the parish churches. Through this discussion, two points will become apparent. Firstly, the books kept in the churches for common use were mainly texts aimed at the clergy to help them fulfil their pastoral and celebratory duties. This confirms our previous conclusion that the laity were not generally expected or allowed to use the volumes. Secondly, and more importantly, not only was there a wide range of texts available in the parish libraries that we know of, but also a number of them were challenging and scholarly. An appraisal of the range of books available prompts a reassessment of the traditional views of the clergy's intellectual interests, which have hitherto been generally negative. Peter Heath, for example, concluded that the English clergy were "men who, if they read at all, read the wrong books".⁵⁹

⁵⁴ BIHR, Prob. Reg., IV, fols. 66v-67r.

⁵⁵ BIHR, Prob. Reg., IV, fol. 173v.

⁵⁶ BIHR, Prob. Reg., V, fols. 457v-459v.

⁵⁷ *Somerset Medieval Wills*, ed. F.M. WEAVER, 3 volumes (Gloucester, 1983), I, p. 294. J.C. COX, *Churchwardens' Accounts* (London, 1913), p. 111.

⁵⁸ MORAN, *Growth of English Schooling*, p. 172.

⁵⁹ HEATH, *English Parish Clergy*, p. 75. See also: TANNER, *Late Medieval Norwich*, p. 41.

This condemnation is a result of a reliance on the evidence of wills and (a few) probate inventories. Wills are a problematic source for book ownership; there is no guarantee that a testator mentioned all his books in a will, and most often he did not.⁶⁰ A volume may also contain a large number of texts, of which only one or two may have been mentioned in order to identify the book. More recently, a discussion of parochial libraries by John Shinnars likewise reached a gloomy conclusion, describing the collections of books as 'bare-bones', consisting almost entirely of service books.⁶¹ The evidence presented here, however, will indicate that a wide variety of legal texts, clerical manuals, grammar books and devotional works were owned by parish churches in late-medieval England and that the intellectual interests of the parochial clergy were not as restricted as previously thought.

We might expect that the most vital and necessary book for a parochial library to be the Bible. Yet previous studies of the clergy's reading and book ownership have criticized the clergy's apparent lack of interest in the Scriptures. Margaret Deanesley, in her study of the English Bible in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, doubted that the clergy were learned enough to even study the Bible or instruct the laity from it.⁶² According to Deanesley, the clergy very rarely used books of the Vulgate, if at all. Of sixty-nine testators who bequeathed Bibles between 1384 and 1526, only sixteen were minor clergy, while twenty-four bequests were made by laymen.⁶³ In his study of the English parish clergy on the eve of the Reformation, Heath likewise bemoaned the scarcity of Bible ownership among the clergy and "the rare use made of them even in the services".⁶⁴

A possible explanation for this apparently low incidence of Bible ownership is that the priests or chaplains may have had access to a copy of the Scriptures chained in the church. Out of the 192 known parish libraries, forty-three included a part of or the whole Scriptures or a commentary on the same. The chance survival of the evidence makes it probable that the actual proportion of parish churches which possessed Bibles was much higher. The use of Bibles in

⁶⁰ The inventory of Thomas Barton, vicar of St Lawrence church in York, names six books which he owned, none of which are mentioned in his will. York Minster Library, L2/5a, fol. 136r. BIHR, Dean and Chapter original wills, 1523.

⁶¹ J. SHINNARS, "Parish libraries in medieval England", in: *A Distinct Voice: Medieval Studies in Honor of Leonard E. Boyle*, ed. J. BROWN and W.P. STONEMAN (Notre Dame, 1997), pp. 207-230.

⁶² M. DEANESLEY, *The Lollard Bible* (Cambridge, 1920), p. 329.

⁶³ DEANESLEY, *Lollard Bible*, p. 332.

⁶⁴ HEATH, *English Parish Clergy*, p. 75.

parish churches indicates that the clergy's knowledge of the Bibles is unlikely to have been as poor as studies of their book bequests have asserted.

From the evidence of church inventories and bequests in wills, three complete volumes of the Bible are known to have been kept in parish churches before the Reformation, together with a New Testament, an English translation of the Evangelists, a volume of the four Evangelists and Genesis and an unspecified book of the Bible.⁶⁵ In addition, the church of Buckingham still owns a Bible which was given to it by John Rudyng, archdeacon of Lincoln, in 1481 to be chained in the chancel for the use of the chaplains and other clergy of the church.⁶⁶ London, British Library, MS Additional 41175, a Wycliffite version of the Gospels of St Matthew and St Mark, was also bequeathed to Pott Shrigley, Cheshire, by master Geoffrey Downes in 1492.⁶⁷ Two other extant Bibles bear inscriptions which show that they had belonged to the parish churches of St Peter-upon-Cornhill in London and St Martin's, Coney Street, York before the Reformation.⁶⁸

Glosses on or concordances to the Bible to assist in the interpretation of the Scriptures were also available in some parish churches. Glossed psalters, one of which was by the Yorkshire mystic, Richard Rolle, are known to have been kept in twelve parish churches.⁶⁹ The 1368 inventories of three churches

⁶⁵ *Archdeaconry*, I, p. 2, pp. 5-6, p. 18, p. 56, p. 81; II, p. 127, p. 129 (St Peter Mancroft and St Michael at Coslany, Norwich, Itteringham, Salthouse, Terrington and Walsoken in Norfolk, 1368). CAVANAUGH, *Study of Books*, p. 890 (St Andrew, Hingham, Norfolk, 1375). York, Exchequer, I, fol. 72v (Holy Trinity, Goodramgate, York, 1394). *Register of John Chandler*, p. 52 (Meare, Somerset, 1405). ST JOHN HOPE, "Inventory", p. 66 (St Mary's, Scarborough, Yorkshire, 1434). York Minster Library, L2/4, fol. 287r-v (Boston and Pinchbeck, Lincolnshire, 1457). BIHR, Prob. Reg., IV, fols. 51v-52r (Saundby, Nottinghamshire, 1467); VII, f. 25v (St Michael Ousebridge, York, 1507). London, Guildhall, MS 1174, fol. 13v (St Margaret's, New Fish Street, London, 1472). COX, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 108 (Bassingbourn, Cambridgeshire, 1498). BIHR, Archbishop's Register, XXVIII, fols. 169v-170r (Keyingham and Ottringham in Yorkshire, 1535).

⁶⁶ KER, *Medieval Libraries*, p. 219 and p. 322. N.R. KER and A.J. PIPER, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, 4 volumes (Oxford, 1969-1992), I, pp. 215-216. A.B. EMDEN, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, 3 volumes (Oxford, 1957-1959), III, pp. 1603-1604.

⁶⁷ KER, *Medieval Libraries*, p. 222 and p. 324. *British Museum Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts 1921-1925*, ed. A. JEFFERIES COLLINS (London, 1950), pp. 251-253. A.B. EMDEN, *A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500* (Cambridge, 1963), p. 193.

⁶⁸ KER, *Medieval Libraries*, p. 221 (London, Guildhall MS 4158 A). KER and PIPER, *Medieval Manuscripts*, IV, pp. 700-701 (York Minster Library, MS XVI.D.13).

⁶⁹ J. GRIFFITHS, "A mid fifteenth-century book list and inventory from East Dereham, Norfolk", *Norfolk Archaeology* 42 (1996), pp. 332-339. ST JOHN HOPE, "Inventory", p. 66 (St

in Norfolk also made mention of the *Vocabularium biblie* of William Brito.⁷⁰ Expositions on the evangelists belonged to the Norfolk churches of Edgefield, Gunthorpe and Walsoken in the late fourteenth century.⁷¹ The Biblical history of Peter Comestor, the *Historia scholastica*, was also popular. Copies were owned by the churches of Cawston in Norfolk in 1368, St Mary, Scarborough in Yorkshire in 1434 and East Dereham in Norfolk in the mid-fifteenth century.⁷² The already mentioned *Historia scholastica* bequeathed by Thomas Tubbac to St John's Church in Micklegate, York, in 1486, may have been a printed copy, as the text had been published in Strassburg and Reutlingen in around 1470.⁷³

Previous studies have indicated that the clergy's apparent lack of interest in the Scriptures extended to other books of devotion and contemplation. Tanner, for example, discovered that, over the whole period of 1370-1549, only one book of devotion was mentioned out of the 104 wills of the Norwich clergy which include books.⁷⁴ Likewise, of the twenty-one vicars and annealers who bequeathed a book or books in fifteenth-century Exeter, not one named a devotional work among their frequent bequests of liturgical and theological manuals.⁷⁵ These disappointing results may again be a result of the problematic nature of will evidence, together with an underestimation of the use of books which the priest or chaplain did not own themselves. In 1394, a *Speculum ecclesie* was bequeathed to Holy Trinity Church, Goodramgate, York by John Hoperton, chaplain.⁷⁶ The *Speculum ecclesie* or *Mirror of Holy Church* was written by St Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury († 1240) and dealt with the three degrees of the knowledge of God by contemplation.⁷⁷ Copies of the

Mary, Scarborough, Yorkshire - Rolle text). *Archdeaconry*, pp. 63-64 (Oxnead, Norfolk), p. 84 (Sharlington, Norfolk), p. 128 (West Walton, Norfolk). BIHR, Prob. Reg., I, fol. 72v (Holy Trinity, Goodramgate, York), II, fols. 71v-72v (St Crux, York), fols. 439v-440v (St Martin, Micklegate, York), IV, fol. 67v (All Saints, Peaseholme, York). *Register of Henry Chichele*, ed. JACOB, pp. 311-314 (St Benedict, London). London, British Library, MS Additional 41175 (Pott Shrigley, Cheshire), MS Royal 19.C.V (Laxton, Nottinghamshire).

⁷⁰ *Archdeaconry*, I, p. 14; II, p. 108, p. 129 (St John Maddermarket in Norwich, Brisley and Walsoken in Norfolk).

⁷¹ *Archdeaconry*, I, p. 36, p. 84; II, p. 129.

⁷² GRIFFITHS, "Book list", p. 336. *Archdeaconry*, I, p. 53. ST JOHN HOPE, "Inventory", p. 66.

⁷³ BIHR, Prob. Reg., V, fol. 299v. J.H. MOREY, "Peter Comestor, biblical paraphrase and the medieval popular Bible", *Speculum* 68 (1993), pp. 6-35.

⁷⁴ TANNER, *Late Medieval Norwich*, pp. 35-42 and pp. 193-197.

⁷⁵ N. ORME, "Education and learning at a medieval English cathedral: Exeter 1380-1548", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 32 (1981), pp. 265-283, p. 274.

⁷⁶ BIHR, Prob. Reg., I, fol. 72v.

⁷⁷ W.A. PANTIN, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1955), p. 222.

Summa de ecclesiasticis officiis of John Belet were also given to the churches of St Michael, Coventry and Harpswell, Lincolnshire in 1404 and 1435 respectively.⁷⁸ Another devotional work, *Dieta salutis*, by William Lanicea (often attributed to Bonaventura or Augustine) was owned by the churches of Orpington in Kent, Boston in Lincolnshire and Reydon in Suffolk in 1425, 1457 and 1470 respectively.⁷⁹ A book of miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a book of St Bernard and a *Prick of Conscience* were owned by St Margaret's Church, New Fish Street, London in 1472.⁸⁰ Alexander Carpenter's devotional work, the *Destructorium viciorum*, was likewise given to St Nicholas's church, Liverpool in 1517.⁸¹ The overall number of devotional works known to have been kept in parochial libraries is by no means large. Nevertheless, their existence at all has hitherto been overlooked; a consequence of which is that previous conclusions of the clergy's interest in contemplative literature may be unduly negative.

The most ubiquitous volumes found in parish churches were manuals to help the clergy with their liturgical, sacramental and pastoral duties. In the fourteenth century, the most popular pastoral manual was probably the *Oculus sacerdotis* of William of Pagula. It had been written in the 1320s and was divided into three parts. The first part, also known as the *Pars oculi*, served as a confession aid. Instructions concerning what the priest should teach to the laity in his sermons was provided in the second part and the third dealt with the sacraments which the priest was required to perform.⁸² A text of the *Oculus sacerdotis* (now Manchester, John Rylands University Library, MS Lat. 339), dating from the second half of the fourteenth century, bears the following inscription:

Iste liber constat ecclesie parochiali de Halsall post mortem domini Willelmi Hoghton capellani.

This book belongs to the parish church of Halsall [Lancashire] after the death of Sir William Hoghton, chaplain.⁸³

⁷⁸ BIHR, Prob. Reg., III, fols. 419v-420r (Gylby), fols. 226v-227r (Wilmyncote).

⁷⁹ *Register of Henry Chichele*, pp. 311-314. York Minster Library, L2/4, fol. 287r-v. MIDDLETON-STEWART, "Provision of books", p. 157.

⁸⁰ London, Guildhall, MS 1174, fol. 13v.

⁸¹ *Bedfordshire Wills Proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury 1383-1548*, ed. M. MCGREGOR (Bedford, 1979: *Bedfordshire Historical Record Society* 58), p. 100.

⁸² PANTIN, *English Church*, pp. 197-198.

⁸³ KER, *Medieval Libraries*, p. 220 and p. 323.

The *Oculus sacerdotis*, or just the *Pars oculi*, was also frequently mentioned in the inventories of churches in the archdeaconry of Norwich, compiled in 1368. The churches which kept a copy of the manual included Merton, Dersingham, Mileham, St John the Baptist in Stiffkey and Tilney.⁸⁴ Copies of the *Pars oculi* were also given to the church of Kingsland in Herefordshire, St Martin near Ludgate in London and Ugborough in Dorset in 1383, 1392 and 1419 respectively.⁸⁵

In the fifteenth century, the *Oculus sacerdotis* began to lose popularity in favour of John de Burgh's *Pupilla oculi*.⁸⁶ The *Pupilla* is a long work, of around 150,000 words, and was therefore expensive. It has been asserted that the *Pupilla oculi* was an elitist work aimed at the graduate clergy, rather than at parish priests.⁸⁷ Academic issues are discussed, such as whether an angel could baptize a man or the procedure for baptizing monsters that are half man and half beast. Burgh also included many citations of civil law in his work, which suggests that he expected his readers to be involved in Church administration.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the high incidence of bequests of the *Pupilla oculi* to parish churches in the fifteenth century and later, and its mention in a number of church inventories, suggests that the parish clergy did find portions of the text, at least, useful and interesting.

In 1437, a cleric of York, Thomas de Alta Ripa, bequeathed to the church of Holy Trinity, Goodramgate in York

liber meus vocatus pupilla oculi cum cathena ferrea fortiter affigatur in stallo quo sedere solebam pro expedicione omnium capellanorum

⁸⁴ *Archdeaconry*, I, p. 50, p. 59, p. 61, p. 77, p. 94; II, p. 109, p. 126, pp. 131-132, p. 140. For other copies of the *Oculus Sacerdotis* or *Pars Oculi* in parochial libraries, see also: G.P. MANDER, "Churchwardens' accounts of All Saints' church, Walsall, 1462-1531", *William Salt Archaeological Society* 52 (1928), pp. 173-267. *Vetus liber Archidiaconi Eliensis*, ed. C.L. FELTOE and E.H. MINNS (Cambridge, 1917), pp. 83-84. WHITING, *Blind Devotion*, p. 22. Anonymus, "A fifteenth-century library list", *Records of Buckinghamshire* 12, 7 (1933), pp. 365-367. D. LEPINE, *A Brotherhood of Canons Serving God: English Secular Cathedrals in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1995: *Studies in the History of Medieval Religion* 8), p. 170.

⁸⁵ CAVANAUGH, *Study of Books*, p. 233. *Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Hustings, London, AD 1258-1688*, ed. R.R. SHARPE, 2 volumes (London, 1889 and 1890), II, pp. 296-297. *Register of Edmund Stafford*, p. 423.

⁸⁶ R.M. BALL, *The Education of the English Secular Clergy in the Later Middle Ages* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1977), p. 28.

⁸⁷ V. GILLESPIE, *The Literary Form of the Middle English Pastoral Manual with Particular Reference to the Speculum christiani and some Related Texts* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Oxford University, 1981), p. 1. BALL, "Education", pp. 61-77 and pp. 98-100.

⁸⁸ BALL, "Education", pp. 59-71.

my book called *Pupilla oculi* to be fixed with an iron chain in the stall where I used to sit for the use of all the chaplains.⁸⁹

John de Burgh's manual was likewise chained in the parish church of Tenderden in Kent at the request of its vicar, John Moer in 1489.⁹⁰ Other copies of the manual were given to the churches of Oakham in Rutland (1409), Ermington in Devonshire (1410), Leeds (1430), Kneesall, Nottinghamshire (1435), Halifax in Yorkshire (1438), Redmarshall in Durham (1458/9) and Mathersay, Nottinghamshire (1466).⁹¹

An inventory of the church of Bassingbourn, Cambridgeshire, made in 1498, included amongst the church's possessions "*ij bookes of the gyft of Sir John Hubbertes one the bybull one other book begynnyng with manipulus curatorum*".⁹² Another copy of the *Manipulus curatorum* was likewise owned by St Steven's church in Cold Norton, the gift of the rector, John Hardyng, in 1519.⁹³ The *Manipulus curatorum* was written by Guy of Mont Rocher in 1333, and was intended to be a comprehensive manual of practical advice and information for parish priests. Instruction on the duties of parish priests, such as their teaching responsibilities towards the laity and the administration of the sacraments, was also provided in the *Regimen animarum*. A copy of this text was bequeathed by the rector of Birkin in Yorkshire, Richard Everyngham, to his parish church in 1438.⁹⁴

Other manuals which are known to have been kept in parish churches concentrated on the separate priestly duties of taking confession and preaching. In 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council ordered that henceforth the laity would be required to confess their sins once a year to their priest.⁹⁵ This placed a great responsibility on the curate who now had to guide his parishioners into revealing their sins and who had to decide which penance was suitable for each vice. Training for the administration of the sacrament of penance was provided by

⁸⁹ BIHR, Prob. Reg., III, fols. 493v-494r.

⁹⁰ PLOMER, "Books in wills", p. 118.

⁹¹ CAVANAUGH, *Study of Books*, p. 853. *Register of Edmund Stafford*, pp. 394-395. *Early Lincoln Wills*, ed. A. GIBBONS (Lincoln, 1888) pp. 138-139. BIHR, Prob. Reg., II, fol. 399r (Holme), III, fols. 419v-420r (Gylby), fol. 519r (King), IV, fols. 41v-42r (Holme).

⁹² COX, *Churchwardens' accounts*, p. 109.

⁹³ *London Consistory Court Wills 1492-1547*, ed. I. DARLINGTON (London, 1967: *London Record Society* 3), p. 48.

⁹⁴ BIHR, Prob. Reg., III, fol. 559r.

⁹⁵ L.E. BOYLE, "The Fourth Lateran Council and manuals of popular theology" in: *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. T.J. HEFFERNAN (Knoxville, 1985), pp. 30-43.

a number of handbooks for confessors written in the later medieval period.⁹⁶ These *summae* provided guidance to the clergy on which questions they should ask their parishioners and which forms of penance they should impose. In 1480, a *Summa confessorum* of Thomas de Chobham, written in around 1215, was given by John Bullington to the church of St Crux in York to be chained in the choir.⁹⁷ Unspecified books of confession also belonged to the churches of St Mary, Scarborough and Gunthorp and Cawston in Norfolk.⁹⁸

In 1281 priests were urged by Archbishop Peckam of Canterbury to instruct their flock on Christian morals and doctrine by preaching to them four times a year. This exhortation was repeated by Archbishop Neville in the mid-fifteenth century.⁹⁹ We cannot be sure how much preaching actually took place in late-medieval England, but the ownership of preaching manuals by some of the parish churches indicates that, for some rectors and priests, instruction in sermonizing was near at hand. Robert Alman, parson of York Minster, for example, gave to the church of Normanton in Yorkshire in 1440 five texts including *Sermones discipuli*, two volumes of *Sermones vincentii* and an unidentified '*sermones michaelis*'.¹⁰⁰ Other un-entitled "sermon books" were kept in the churches of Embleton in Northumberland (1379); Fugglestone in Wiltshire (1383/4); St Dunstan's-in-the-East, London (1422); St Michael, Coventry (1425); and St Ewen's, Bristol (1491-2).¹⁰¹ In the sixteenth century, the popularity of these sermon collections, especially the *Sermones discipuli* of John Herolt, the *Sermones dominicales* of William Peraldus and the *Sermones de tempore et de sanctis* of Vincent Ferrer, grew noticeably. A extant collection of "*sermones de verbis domini et apostoli*" ("sermons on the words of the Lord and the Apostles") by Augustine contains an early sixteenth-century inscription of ownership by the church of Fenny Bentley in Derbyshire.¹⁰² In 1514 a copy of the manual by Peraldus was given by the vicar of Bredon to Melbourne

⁹⁶ T.N. TENTLER, "The *Summa* for confessors as an instrument of social control", in: *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late-Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, ed. C. TRINKAUS and H.A. OBERMAN (London, 1974), pp. 103-126.

⁹⁷ BIHR, Prob. Reg., v, fol. 96v.

⁹⁸ ST JOHN HOPE, "Inventory", p. 66. *Archdeaconry*, I, p. 53 and p. 84.

⁹⁹ P. MARSHALL, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), p. 88.

¹⁰⁰ BIHR, Archbishop's Register, XXVII, fol. 152r.

¹⁰¹ York Minster Library, L2/4, fol. 68r. *Register of Henry Chichele*, pp. 311-314. CAVANAUGH, *Study of Books*, p. 553 and p. 922. MACLEAN, "Notes", p. 155.

¹⁰² Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C. 88.

church in Derbyshire.¹⁰³ Another example is the bequest of a *Sermones parati* by John Hardyng, rector, to St Steven's in Cold Norton in 1519.¹⁰⁴

The priests who preached may also have turned to hagiographical writings for stories of miracles and divine justice to punctuate their moral teachings. Parochial libraries of later medieval England frequently contained saints' lives, many of which may have been used as aids for sermon-making as well as for devotional reading. One of the manuscripts of the very popular compendium of saints' lives, the *Legenda aurea*, for example, contains an index compiled for the aid of priests to help them find examples to use in preaching.¹⁰⁵ The 1405 inventory of the church of Sonning in Berkshire included an entry for "two gatherings of life of St Cyricus and St Judith".¹⁰⁶ Copies of the *Legenda aurea* belonged to a number of churches including Terrington, Salthouse and Tittleshall in Norwich (1368), Olney in Buckinghamshire (1410), Orpington in Kent (1425), Kneesall in Nottinghamshire (1435) and St Lawrence in Reading (1517).¹⁰⁷ The English translation, the *Golden Legend*, could also be found in the libraries of All Saints, Selworthy in Somerset in 1491 and St Margaret's, London in 1502.¹⁰⁸

Grammar was the most basic and elementary subject of study in the later Middle Ages, and scholars were expected to master it as a foundation of their learning.¹⁰⁹ It is therefore not surprising to find a substantial number of grammar books in parochial libraries. These would have been used not only by the chaplains of the church, but also by any pupils taught in the church. A copy of Hugutio of Pisa's grammar, for example, was bequeathed by a subdean of the cathedral of Wells, Nicholas Pontesbury, to the church of St Mary, Wellington in Somerset in 1371.¹¹⁰ He instructed that the volume should be delivered by the vicar and churchwardens to the schoolmaster of the parish in return for

¹⁰³ KER and PIPER, *Medieval Manuscripts*, I, pp. 64-65 (London, Gray's Inn MS 20).

¹⁰⁴ *London Consistory Court Wills*, ed. DARLINGTON, p. 48. See also: BIHR, Archbishop's Register, XXVII, fols. 139v-140r (Elys).

¹⁰⁵ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. V. Q. IV. 13, cited in: H.G. PFANDER, "The mediaeval friars and some alphabetical reference-books for sermons", *Medium Aevum* 3 (1934), pp. 19-29.

¹⁰⁶ *Register of John Chandler*, p. 66.

¹⁰⁷ *Archdeaconry*, I, p. 81; II, p. 111 and p. 127. Anonymus, "Library list", p. 365. *Register of Henry Chichele*, pp. 311-314. BIHR, Prob. Reg., III, fols. 419v-420r (Gylby). KERRY, *History*, p. 101.

¹⁰⁸ *Somerset Medieval Wills*, I, p. 294. COX, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 111.

¹⁰⁹ C.R. BLAND, *The Teaching of Grammar in Late-Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 1991), p. 7.

¹¹⁰ ORME, *Education*, p. 107.

prayers for his soul. Similarly, in 1466, the parish church of Hedon in Holderness received a number of grammar books for teaching the boys in the grammar school.¹¹¹

We might expect there to be a rise in the number of grammar texts given to parish churches in the period before the Reformation. The late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries witnessed an increase of interest in and promotion of education. Jo Ann Hoeppner Moran, for example, has traced a significant and sudden rise in the evidence for schools in the diocese of York in the sixteenth century.¹¹² Before 1548, eighty-five grammar schools are known to have existed in the diocese. The first documented date for forty-five or over half of these schools is in the early sixteenth century. The incidence of gifts of grammar books to parish churches during the late fourteenth, fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries remains fairly even however. The most popular grammar text was that of Hugutio of Pisa and can be found in the churches of Stanton in Norfolk (1368); Meare in Somerset (1405), St Mary, Scarborough in Yorkshire (1434) and Bridport in Dorset (1476), as well as St Mary, Wellington mentioned above.¹¹³ Copies of the *Catholicon* of John de Balbis were likewise owned by the churches of St Martin near Ludgate in London and St Margaret, New Fish Street, London in 1392 and 1472 respectively.¹¹⁴ Bequests of the Latin dictionary called *Medulla grammaticae* were also made to All Saints church in North Street, York in 1440, to Newark church in Nottinghamshire in 1467 and 1500, and St Saviour's, York, in 1513-1514.¹¹⁵

Handbooks of canon law were also available in some parish churches in order to assist the clergy in their legal dealings. The two standard volumes were *Decreta* and *Decretalia*.¹¹⁶ At least seven churches in Norfolk kept a copy of the *Decretalia*, as shown by the records of the visitation of the archdeacon of Norwich in 1368.¹¹⁷ An inventory of goods of St Nicholas church, Bristol, made in 1394/5, contains an entry of "*j liber de-Cretalis*". This book of decretals was still in the church in 1432-1433.¹¹⁸ Another text of the *Decretalia* was

¹¹¹ BIHR, Prob. Reg., IV, fols. 66v-67r.

¹¹² MORAN, *Growth*, pp. 95-98.

¹¹³ *Vetus*, p. 84. *Register of John Chandler*, p. 52. ST JOHN HOPE, "Inventory", p. 66. ORME, *Education*, p. 96 and p. 107.

¹¹⁴ *Calendar of Wills*, II, pp. 296-297. London, Guildhall, MS 1174, fol. 13v.

¹¹⁵ BIHR, Prob. Reg., III, fol. 318r-v (Pyge), IV, fols. 18r-19v (Boston). Archbishop's Register, XXVI, fol. 141v (Shirburn).

¹¹⁶ The *Decreta* was a twelfth-century compilation of Gratian, while the *Decretalia* were compiled under the authority of Gregory IX. *Archdeaconry*, II, pp. xliii-xliv.

¹¹⁷ *Archdeaconry*, I, p. 22, p. 56, p. 61, p. 62, p. 69 and p. 84; II, p. xlv and p. 129.

¹¹⁸ ATCHLEY, "Parish records of St Nicholas", p. 36 and p. 43.

given to St Benedict church in London by John Wakering, Bishop of Norwich in 1425.¹¹⁹ Likewise, the 1431 inventory of St Mary at Hill, London, included “a boke of laweis callyd decretallis”.¹²⁰

The *Summa summarum* of William of Pagula was another popular legal manual. Like the *Oculus sacerdotis*, it was aimed at the learned and erudite. The large text was divided into five books and 257 chapters and aimed to provide a comprehensive guide to canon law and theology. It discussed a wide variety of problems with which either a wealthy and powerful ecclesiastic or simple parish priest might have to deal.¹²¹ The *Summa summarum* was one of the books owned by the church of Meare in Somerset in 1405.¹²² Copies of Pagula’s legal manual were also bequeathed to the churches of Rattlesden in Suffolk (1381), St Michael, Coventry (1404) and St Peter, Marlborough (1432).¹²³

Although this study of parochial libraries aims to show that the clergy’s reading habits and intellectual interests may have been more ambitious and wide-ranging than traditional views allow, this argument cannot be applied with any force to the use of books of history or logic. Evidence of the ownership of history books by parish churches is rare. An example is the bequest of Ranulph Higden’s *Polychronicon* to the church of Boston, Lincolnshire, in 1457.¹²⁴ In 1368, a copy of Peter Lombard’s *Textus sentenciarum* was held in Walsoken church, Norfolk, and a “*liber quartus sentenciarum*” belonged to St John Maddermarket, Norwich and Horningtoft in Norfolk.¹²⁵ This, together with the unentitled “book of logic” in the 1476 inventory of St Mary’s church, Bridport in Devon is the extent of the evidence of works of logic in late medieval parish libraries.¹²⁶ Miscellaneous works, such as Bartholomaeus Anglicus’s *De proprietatibus rerum*, John Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* and Giles of Rome’s *De regimine principum*, also occasionally appear as bequests to churches or in church inventories.¹²⁷

¹¹⁹ *Register of Henry Chichele*, pp. 311-314.

¹²⁰ *The Medieval Records of a London City Church (St Mary at Hill) AD 1420-1559*, ed. H. LITTLEHALES (London, 1905: EETS OS 128), p. 28.

¹²¹ PANTIN, *English Church*, p. 196.

¹²² *Register of John Chandler*, p. 51.

¹²³ CAVANAUGH, *Study of Books*, p. 355 (Freton). BIHR, Prob. Reg., III, fols. 226v-227r (Wilmyncote). PLOMER, “Books in wills”, p. 115.

¹²⁴ York Minster Library, L2/4, fol. 287r-v (Edlyngton).

¹²⁵ *Archdeaconry*, I, p. 14; II, p. 108 and p. 129.

¹²⁶ ORME, *Education*, p. 96.

¹²⁷ MCGREGOR, *Bedfordshire Wills*, pp. 6-8. LANDER, *Government*, p. 162. *Register of John Chandler*, p. 52.

Only a few works by the Church Fathers are known to have been kept in parish churches. These include the copy of Jerome's *Vitae patrum* bequeathed to St Michael's, Coventry in 1404 and Isidore of Seville's *Summum bonum* which belonged in 1434 to St Mary's, Scarborough.¹²⁸ The churches of St Mary, Repps and East Reynham, both in Norfolk, also owned Gregory the Great's *Omelia et pastoralia* in 1368 and 1479 respectively.¹²⁹ Occasional volumes of theology, such as John Nider's *Preceptorium divine legis* which was given to Wath church, Yorkshire in 1508, were also owned by parish churches.¹³⁰

English works begin to appear in parochial libraries at the end of the fifteenth century. As I have mentioned, copies of the *Golden Legend* were kept in All Saints, Selworthy in Somerset and St Margaret's London in 1491 and 1502 respectively.¹³¹ St Mary's church, Swansea, received a collection of books from William Gefferey in 1503, including an English translation of Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon* by John Trevisa and John Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*.¹³² In 1520, an English book of chronicles was given to Normanton church in Yorkshire by Robert Alman, vicar.¹³³

Therefore, although we cannot say that the range of books available in pre-Reformation parish churches was complete (the rare mention of books of theology, logic or history is noticeable), a substantial number of church libraries did have copies of the most essential aids to the clerical life, in particular, Biblical texts and commentaries, a range of pastoral manuals, grammars and devotional texts. Instruction and guidance in religious, legal and moral issues was therefore available to the clergy, without the expense of commissioning a book. The bequest of such volumes to parish churches is also positive evidence of the donor's concern with the education and devotion of the clergy officiating there. The most common form of bequest was by a former priest or vicar to his parish church of his own manual, for the use and instruction of the succeeding priest and his chaplains. A *Dieta salutis*, for example, was given to Reydon church in Suffolk by Mr Roger Scolys, for the instruction of priests "here following".¹³⁴ Likewise, Robert Est, a parson of York Minster, left to the parish church of Brigsley in Lincolnshire a *Legenda sanctorum* and *Speculum christiani* "ibi-

¹²⁸ BIHR, Prob. Reg., III, fols. 226v-227r (Wilmyncote). ST JOHN HOPE, "Inventory", p. 66.

¹²⁹ *Archdeaconry*, I, p. 51; II, p. 100.

¹³⁰ York Minster Library, L2/5a, fols. 88-89 (Harrison).

¹³¹ *Somerset Medieval Wills*, I, p. 294. COX, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 111.

¹³² LANDER, *Government*, p. 162.

¹³³ BIHR, Archbishop's Register, XXVII, fol. 152r.

¹³⁴ MIDDLETON-STEWART, "Provision of books", p. 157.

dem imperpetuum ad animarum edificationem remanendum" ("to remain there forever for the edification of souls").¹³⁵ Bishops and archdeacons were also encouraged to try to ensure that the clergy under their jurisdiction were learned and devout. The bequests of books to parish churches found in a number of wills of wealthy and powerful ecclesiastics might be a reflection of this duty. John Wakering, Bishop of Norwich, for instance, gave his glossed psalter and *Decretalia* to the church of St Benet Sherehog in London.¹³⁶ Likewise, the church of St Mary, Feltwell, in Norfolk received a book which contained the *Pars oculi* and other texts from Thomas de Lexham, Canon of Hereford.¹³⁷

The gift of books to English parish churches during the later Middle Ages thus anticipates some of the changes attributed to the English Reformation. As we have seen, the use of the Scriptures in the churches was not unusual even before the reforms of the protestants. The Reformation injunctions concerning the provision of English Bibles in parish churches may have intended to extend and develop the already established tradition of providing Latin Bibles in churches. Books in English had likewise begun to appear in parochial libraries by the end of the fifteenth century. The increasing interest in preaching also anticipates developments attributed to the Reformation. The importance of preaching and teaching the catechism was emphasised during the years of religious controversy.¹³⁸ Injunctions of 1547, for example, ordered that the parish clergy should use Cranmer's *Book of Homilies* in church every Sunday.¹³⁹ In 1555, Edmund Bonner, Bishop of London, together with two of his chaplains, produced the *Profytable and necessary doctrine*, containing thirteen homilies.¹⁴⁰ Yet, as we have seen, preaching aids, particularly collections of sermons, were already becoming increasingly popular in the parish churches in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

Despite the wishes and instructions of these testators, we cannot of course know if these books were ever used by the clergy of the parish. This is an inescapable problem and allows for the possibility that the traditional views of the ignorance and illiteracy of the minor clergy are indeed accurate. However, it is difficult to imagine that the clergy could have resisted use of these books, when

¹³⁵ York Minster Library, L2/4, fol. 331r-v.

¹³⁶ *Register of Henry Chichele*, pp. 311-314.

¹³⁷ CAVANAUGH, *Study of Books*, pp. 512-514.

¹³⁸ HEATH, *English Parish Clergy*, p. 93. MARSHALL, *Catholic Priesthood*, p. 88. M. CHRISTIAN, "Preaching and sermons", in: *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Reformation*, ed. H.J. HILLERBRAND (Oxford, 1996), III, pp. 328-329.

¹³⁹ DUFFY, *Stripping*, p. 453.

¹⁴⁰ DUFFY, *Stripping*, p. 525 and pp. 534-537.

private copies would have been expensive and laborious to acquire. Also, it would be seem peculiar that the bequests of such volumes to churches continued to be so popular in the late Middle Ages if the clergy as a whole were not capable or willing to use them. Perhaps the existence of these volumes in the churches can be accepted as no more than a potential. Nevertheless, it is a potential of instruction in clerical duties, grammar and law, and aid in devotion and contemplation, that should no longer be overlooked in studies of the clergy's intellectual and reading interests in pre-Reformation England.

